

Class

231

Book

R 576

General Theological Seminary Library

Chelsea Square, New York

Purchased from the fund bequeathed to the Seminary by

EUGENE AUGUSTUS HOFFMAN, D. D.

DEAN 1879-1902

THE KINGSHIP OF GOD

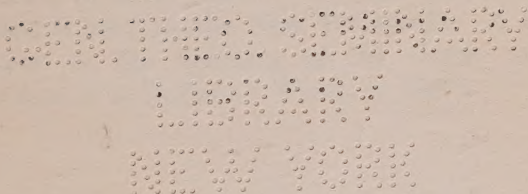
CHRISTIAN REVOLUTION SERIES
No IX.

THE KINGSHIP OF GOD

BY

G. B. ROBSON

Author of "The Way to Personality"



THE SWARTHMORE PRESS LTD.

72, OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W.1

1920

231

R 576

68738

TO MY CHILDREN

E. R. R.

K. S. R.

B. E. R.

IN HOPE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY
JAN 10 1904

NOTE

OUR accepted English translations use the phrase "Kingdom of God," and this has passed into common speech to an extent which makes the use of such a word as "Kingship" sound rather like pedantry. Yet there is no doubt that the use of "Kingdom" has led to wrong conceptions of the meaning of Jesus, where as "Kingship" puts the emphasis where it ought to be, and where the Greek word puts it, on the rule rather than on that which is ruled over, and avoids also any suggestion of locality. Dr. Moffat's translation is sometimes "Reign," sometimes "Realm." "Kingship" is the first choice of Souter's lexicon, and seems to cover most of the senses in which the word is used in the New Testament. A full discussion of the meaning of the Greek word can be found in Dalman's *Words of Jesus*.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD - - -	9
II. GOD AND MAN AT ONE - - -	25
III. THE SON OF MAN - - -	51
IV. THE KINGSHIP OF GOD IN PRACTICE	63
V. THE OFFER OF JESUS - - -	78
NOTE ON APOCALYPTIC - -	90
VI. THE FINAL ILLUSTRATION - -	96
VII. THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW ORDER	108
VIII. INTERPRETATIONS - - -	118
IX. THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST - -	127
X. THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY - -	146

I

THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD

i

WHEN Mark, in the shortest of our four gospels, brings Jesus to the stage of public activity, the dullest of us cannot but feel something of the zest with which he does it.

Now after John had been committed to prison, Jesus came up to Galilee, proclaiming the Good News of God and saying, "The time has come; the Kingship of God is at hand; repent and believe the Good News."

Jesus is launched upon the sea of His adventure as though by one on the very deck himself, letting out the flag they are to sail under. With what eagerness we should look for the sequel, did not familiarity forbid—familiarity, and the fact that we are living nineteen hundred years after the proclamation was made, not in a recovered Paradise, but in a world made desolate by war. Some explanation seems rather to be called for, because we cannot fail to see, on even a cursory reading of the gospels, that Jesus was not just announcing some new intellectual discovery, but making what we can only describe as an offer to His nation, a fulfilment of all its most cherished dreams.

We are told that Jesus had been looking at the world for some thirty years when He made His great announcement, but His world appears to us to have been so much simpler than ours that what was valid then might be irrelevant or inadequate now. Is that the explanation? It cannot be just that, for Jesus was rejected and put to death by His own people. Was it then that He was too much in advance of His age? It has been so suggested.

“ O outcast Christ, it was too soon
For flags of battle to be furled
While life was yet at the high noon.
Come in the twilight of the world ;
Its kings may greet thee without scorn
And crown Thee then without a thorn.” (A.E.)

Is it still too soon? Was Jesus ignorant of the practical facts of life? One does not get that impression from reading the story. It is true that He was brought up in a country village of no importance—save to the folk who lived there—but He was within easy reach of a main road, along which the most variegated traffic continually passed and the news of all the world was discussed. “ Traders, pilgrims, Herods—the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—all within reach, and travelling no faster as a rule than the camel cared to go, they formed a panorama of life for a thoughtful and imaginative boy.”* At home Jesus knew what an average worker’s life is, what his hopes and difficulties; which is to say that He knew from inside what is still, despite all changes, the experience of by far the greatest number of the world’s popula-

* Glover: *The Jesus of History*.

tion. Then there was the yearly visit to Jerusalem, bringing Him to the centre of the religious life of His nation, against which was set for contrast the dignity, power and urbanity of Rome. It may be said that a young provincial Jew of the working class was in no position to see or value rightly the problems and possibilities of empire, but there again He could see things from the standpoint of the governed, who are always in the majority. Nor would He see less clearly because He was free, both from the bias and self-complacency which tend to accompany membership of a ruling race and, as the records show, from any sort of narrow and bitter nationalism. Yet He was a lover of His country.

How wide was His vision is shown in what is one of the surprises of the story. Jesus has little or nothing to say about some of the more radical evils of His day, of which slavery and prostitution may be taken as examples. It could not be that He did not see them, for they were obvious enough, and He notices in passing tricks of evil that are reckoned comparatively venial. He saw, in fact, beyond these great evils to the root from which they sprang.

What Jesus saw was a world-order which men had themselves created, but had allowed to overcome them. They were fast in it, so that even their virtues, which He recognised and appreciated, came to nothing. This "world" is not the world of nature in itself, which delighted Him, nor of human life, which He freely shared, but the web of fears, negations and lies which has been spun over these by man himself, turning to evil the gifts of the one and the powers of the

other. He saw, moreover, that this world-order had no power of deliverance within itself, since its principle (the Prince of this world) is above all things illusory, "a liar from the beginning," and never arrives at the promised end. "Will Satan cast out Satan?"

It was no naïve innocent or one-idea reformer who, after thirty years of quiet thought, came forward with His message, but One who had observed a world of men and women not very different from ours in essentials, and whose vision of it reveals Him, not as out-dated, but still in front of us.

If we turn for a moment from the world of Jesus to that of to-day, we must be struck with the accuracy of this diagnosis, and may guess why He led no crusade against this or that widespread form of evil. He had come to do a greater thing, to supplant by reality that principle of evil and delusion which makes the present age so much at one with His own. For if we look at the order of human society, it is impossible to escape the suspicion that it contains some hidden weakness which continually betrays and defeats us, in spite of the loftiest aims and the most encouraging promises. How many discoveries, reforms and such like in our own day have looked like the dawn of the millenium—until we got them? The way in which the illusion of continual progress deceives us has been so often pointed out during these last years of war, that I need do no more than refer to it here. It is not that in the spheres of knowledge and practice no real advances are made, but the good they promise is only partially

attained, and is cancelled out of the sum by the evil uses to which they are put. It is true that there is so much goodwill in the world that when an evil becomes intolerable we deal with it, but that does not of necessity mean real progress in moral vision, but merely that we have become aware, by painful consequences, of some long-standing relapse which is now to be made good, often in such a fashion that the mending of one trouble provides the occasion for another, leaving us, on the whole, no farther forward than before.

Dr. Shailer Matthews, for example, looking over the range of human history, finds three great lines of advance. (1) The substitution of inward authority for outer. (2) The growing appreciation of the personal worth of the individual. (3) The fight for rights becomes the giving of justice.* Had we read such a statement before the war, we should all have agreed, and we must not be blind to the great amount of truth in it now. But must it not also be sorrowfully admitted that precisely on these points the war and its consequences have been such a setback as the world has scarcely seen? We are down again to the old level of violence, and of a justice which is little more than what Plato called long ago, "the advantage of the stronger."

As I have said, it is not that there is no goodwill in the world: there is more, there is active devotion. The story of the war, viewed from one standpoint, is resplendent with heroisms and sacrifices which move one well nigh to worship. But what a state of things is it in which the bravest men of many nations must use their

* *The Spiritual Interpretation of History.*

courage and devotion in mutual slaughter, and the best of women have to give themselves to further the slaughter and deal with the ghastly results?

What are we to say to the Arab Sheik who asks, "You people of the West, with all your modern inventions, with your new scientific powers, arts, books and material luxuries, have you greater happiness, are you nearer the centre of Life itself than I am?"* True it is, these things might serve life, ought to serve life, and promise to do so, but we cannot flatter ourselves that they have enriched human personality, or brought God nearer, in any sort of proportion to their promise.

Christian people still say that Christ alone can save us. When it is asked why, since the church is now so widely spread in the world, this salvation does not happen, we are pointed as a rule to two or three things. One is the fact that certain evils have been done away with, certain reforms gained. With that I have already dealt. Another is the fact that Christ does "save" a number of people out of each generation. Far be it from me to belittle that, but surely one must ask, "What of it, if the next generation is no farther ahead?" Is there nothing more? Must the human race as a whole just go round and round, everlastingly preparing for something which never arrives? A third thing pointed to is the work of the churches amongst backward and degraded peoples. There are truly wonderful instances of savage tribes redeemed and lifted on to a new plane of life. This is perhaps the

* Tudor Pole: *The Spiritual Significance of the Hour.*

most hopeful sign in the world of real advance, save for one sad thing. During the last few years not savage tribes, but civilised and nominally Christian nations have been at war, and there have been revealed depths of savagery, vindictiveness and disregard for truth that have appalled us. We cannot forget that these and similar qualities of degradation have been displayed by people who, for the most part and in private life, were decent and kindly folk, many of them bearing the Christian name, and hoping to be among the "saved." Is this then the sort of thing to which the heathen of the world are being delivered?

As these words are being written,* we are contemplating the ruins of a house built upon the sand, and watching with painful and prolonged interest endeavours to lay the foundations for a new one. We are given to understand that the *plan* has been very considerably altered, and may yet be modified further, and we are full of hope, or would be, if our most distinguished military authority did not tell us that "the seeds of future conflicts are already sown in every quarter of the globe."

Is there some fatal defect in the order in which we are involved, where "folly and hate can bawl sanity out of hearing?" If so, is it not God's fault? What is He doing? No question has been more insistently asked by simple folk in these days, and there is probably no older question in the world.

Yet we have hope, an inextinguishable hope that human life will somehow be redeemed. In

* During the Paris Peace Conference.

that also we are one with the world of Jesus, though the hope current then was not so much in progress, as in sudden and perhaps violent intervention from some other sphere. The people of that day were disappointed because things did not happen just so, and we have inclined to the other extreme and pinned our faith to the idea of the slow but steady upward march. Somewhere between the two, the good thing that Jesus promised has escaped us, so far as it concerned the world. Men and women, as individuals, have found more in Christ than tongue can tell, but the world of which they are a part is still very much the world which put Him to death. Nor is it easy for the church to claim that even it is free from the net of delusion which is spun by the father of lies. It has been caught too.

Is not all this, however, to come round again to where we began, only to confess that Jesus was mistaken, if not in His diagnosis, then in the remedy He offered? Must we conclude that the world moves to other ends by other methods than those He proposed?

We might argue that this world-order is to be accepted as temporary and probationary, God's appointed school for the formation of character, "a training ground for the immortal soul." When the lessons are learned we pass on, and all that we have endured will be a thing to smile at. There is enough plausibility in this idea to command our attention, but it leaves on our hands the obvious difficulty that the world, in too many instances, does not so much form characters as crush them, like some inefficient and wasteful machine. It is very difficult to

support the assertion that everybody has a fair chance.

Yet another version of this idea suggests that the world is there, not to be accepted, but to be dealt with. If you don't like it, change it!* It is there to be changed, and no one will be better pleased than God to see it done. That, indeed, is true enough, according to Jesus, but the power to alter it rightly is not easily come by. We seem to need a start, whatever the reason may be, not to mention the fact that we are always altering it, and "the more it changes, the more it remains the same." We need an end in view.

The idea of evolution as the only method, a long, slow ascent on a very slightly rising road, with small room for crises, and none at all for anything like intervention, did seem to explain most things, and events seemed quite gracefully to adapt themselves to it until August, 1914, when the bottom suddenly fell out. As a sole explanation of the world order, this idea seems now to be too simple. We are left wondering whether Jesus, after all, did see some great possibility of which advantage might have been taken, and if so, what it really was. To enquire into this is the purpose of this book, and also to ask why the "good news" of Jesus was not received, what were the results of its rejection, and if the offer still stands.

It may seem odd to some, in view of the circumstances, to turn back so far, and there is a certain pride which makes it hard for us to suppose that all that is needful has been given, and only awaits our understanding and applica-

* H. G. Wells: *Joan and Peter*.

tion. Why should we be dependent on Jesus? Let us wash our hands of all past failures and programmes and start afresh. But we cannot do that. The wise men at the Peace Conference have spent many months in trying to do it, yet the past has netted them. It may be that if they had gone back quite deliberately, past the secret treaties they have struggled to get free from, past 1871, right away back to the strange events recorded from Palestine in the first century, they might have discovered a way out, for there and then was enacted a drama in which a great answer to our problems was set out and which whether we approve or not, the world cannot escape from. "The Prince of this world has been judged." That is a good reason for going back. Those crucifixes in Flanders, which, as our boys have told us, so often remained standing when all about them was laid in ruins, are the symbol of a great fact. Jesus Christ remains; His cross still reproaches us; and we know that if He and the things He stood for could be taken away or forgotten, a great light would have gone out in the world. No one who seeks after truth escapes Him. Bernard Shaw has discovered that He is at least a first-rate political economist. H. G. Wells, in his passionate new evangelism, is asking us, under his own idiom, to repent and believe the good news of the Kingship of God. Benjamin Kidd sees in Him who stood before Pilate the symbol of those principles which are to lead the world forward to the possession of true power. And there are others who might be named if there were need. Everywhere men are looking for the salvation of God amid the fears and

obstinate questionings of these dark days. The New Testament leaves on the mind of the reader the impression that it deals with One who saw through, and was able to create in others the conviction that He made a way through the same things that trouble us now. If the way is still open, it must be worth looking at.

ii

It was at a time of religious revival that Jesus came forward with a message to His nation. It is believed by some scholars, not without reason, that He had already made some definite approach to the leading men of His people in Jerusalem itself, and had been rejected. After they refused to listen, He appealed directly to the people, and used His own means of making His message known. Whether that is so or not, it must be noted that when He began to preach in Galilee He was not merely addressing individuals with a view to saving them out of a wicked world. He spoke to His nation and, through them, to the world, the burden of His words being that the deliverance they sought for was at the doors. That was "the Good News of God."

The very form of the first public words of Jesus tells us that He was not springing upon His hearers some wholly new thing. John, His immediate predecessor and herald, had made a similar declaration and while the Baptist was not received by the Jewish leaders, he does not seem to have been regarded as breaking with the religion of his day. In fact, we know that the idea of the Kingship of God goes back well into

the early days of Jewish history. God was the real King ; leaders and judges were but deputies. Even when the nation took to setting up kings of its own who, with few exceptions, fulfilled all the painful prophecies of Samuel, it was the theory that they had only a delegated authority. God is still really King though for reasons which do not appear and are a grief and perplexity to men, He does not take full hold of His Kingship, but leaves men to struggle on unaided. What could be more poignant than the appeal of Ps. 44 : " Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord ? "

No purpose would be served by my dwelling at length on this matter, for there are many books, both scholarly and popular, which deal with it, and to them the reader may turn at need. For our purpose, what we are to remember is that through all the vicissitudes of the Jewish nation the dream persisted in some form or other, and inspired its one great art of religious poetry. Doubtless the conception was often narrow in its outlook and limited in its reach, but it was a great idea and gave Jesus a starting point, both as to the idea of the Kingship of God and of His own place in it. Many of the phrases Jesus used seem to have had a popular currency and were drawn, not only from the Old Testament itself, but from other writings not included there, of a type similar to the book of Daniel.

When Jesus began to preach, the air was full of expectation. There were those who looked for the restoration of Israel as a pure theocracy, within which there was to be no room for any king less than God Himself, and in which the Law would be supreme. There were more popular

beliefs in a coming Messiah, who, as a mighty warrior, would make Israel supreme among the nations. Likely enough there were as many shades of belief in between these two, and on either side of them, as to-day there are ideas of the perfect social state. The gospels themselves give the suggestion of unrest and expectation and divergent opinions. The preaching of the Baptist was accompanied by the signs of a great religious revival. He spoke of a swiftly coming judgment, and called for repentance, because the Kingship of God was near. The Messiah was on the way. All this was in line with the ideas of Apocalyptic literature, and no doubt gave the ideas and phrases of that literature a new popular currency. Folk began to think that anything was possible and were busy classifying the possibilities. It was at such a time that Jesus entered upon public life, and we can imagine with what interest men must have turned to him who seemed to enter by the door to which the Baptist had pointed and began His proclamation on the same note. Is He the One-who-is-to-come? He did not clearly say so, but proclaimed the Kingship of God as something near and available, no longer delayed through any holding back on the part of God, but only waiting upon the understanding and acceptance of man.

At that point, Jesus and His hearers were on common ground. However they interpreted the words, whatever they included in them, in whatever way they looked for their realisation, all religious Jews wanted the Kingship of God, though, as now, there were those to whom the existing order was profitable and whose desire was qualified.

"Sometime," they might have said, "but not in our time, Thy Kingship come!" Yet probably they scarcely admitted the fact, even to themselves, and they would share in what must have been a common first thought about Jesus: Which party is He going to take sides with? There were fierce nationalists ready for violence, religious separatists who wanted to see the standards of the law emphasised, apocalyptists who looked for revelations in the heavens, and a great number of quiet, godly folk who had few theories, but hungered to see any evidence that God had not forgotten His people, and who brooded over the prophets with patient longing and unsubdued hope.

Is it possible to find any further ground common to Jesus and His hearers amid the medley of ideas of which these are a hasty summary? It has been widely believed that Jesus was wholly at variance with them all, save perhaps the last class, but it seems incredible that He should begin as He did if that were so, for however difficult it may be to find words for one's message, the last way to be understood is to start with a phrase which has one meaning for the speaker and a totally different one for the hearer. At the same time, we may reasonably suppose that Jesus was not shut up to the ideas of His time, and that the preconceptions of the people, and even of His disciples, made it very difficult for Him to win an understanding. In the end He did differ from them all, not so much in what they wanted, as in the methods by which they supposed it was to be achieved, but it is likely that He saw some good in all that His people

desired, and more common standing ground than the mutual use of a phrase. It is notable that, from time to time, modern representatives of all the classes I have mentioned have claimed Jesus for their party. If we can in any way find and express that in which Jesus and all those waiting and watching folk were agreed, we shall be able to take a first step towards discovering what reality or possibility in human life and experience the phrase "Kingship of God" sets forth.

If we consider sympathetically and endeavour to live into the hopes and desires of all the parties we have named, leaving on one side the often crude and impossible, and sometimes hard and evil ways by which they thought these hopes might be realised, we can reach a further point of agreement between them and Jesus. All were agreed that the Kingship of God meant, *God and man at-one in all the purposes and activities of life*. It is not suggested that they put it in this way, but the idea these words express underlay all their other ideas. As such, they may serve as a starting point for our enquiry, and will help us to see what kind of questions we must ask. What is God like? What is the nature of man, and what are his possibilities? What is the relation between God and man? How is this at-oneness to be achieved, how expressed? What will it lead to?

These are some of the things we have to look at. We can see off-hand that there is room for deep enough differences between Jesus and His hearers on these questions, for no greater gulfs divide men even to-day, and as then, men who at the bottom all want the same thing. It is

scarcely too much to say that practically all the differences between men that matter run back to different ideas about God and our relationship to Him.

God and man at-one in all the purposes and activities of life. We will take this as a working description of the Kingship of God, with the understanding that we shut up no one of these words in preconceived limitations.

II

GOD AND MAN AT ONE

i.—GOD

SINCE our thoughts about God are so fundamental we cannot do better than begin with the question: How did Jesus think about God, and in what respects differently from those to whom He spoke?

There must have been much common ground, for Jesus, as well as His hearers, had been nourished on the Old Testament, which contains a sublime view of God. What could be more profound than the great name, I AM; what more tender than the picture of God in the closing verses of the book of Jonah? True, there is that in the Old Testament which seems to conflict with these ideas, but as we follow the thought of the Jewish prophets, we see the cruder elements fall out under the influence of worthier conceptions. God is one: He is glorious in wisdom and might; He is holy; He is just; He is full of compassion and of great loving-kindness; He is forgiving; His tender mercies are over all His works: these are no mean thoughts of God, and it might seem that if Jesus and His hearers could start together on that level, anything should have been possible. It was not so, however, for the religious thinkers had been chiefly engaged

in putting God farther away. That God is one, as against the multiplicity of pagan deities, they held and declared every sabbath ; that He is compassionate and forgiving to certain people they admitted ; but His holiness was their chief concern. On the surface that seems right and good, but we have to remember that to them holiness was much more ritual than moral. It was a separatist holiness. " The Holy One " was afar off, hidden in a blaze of transcendence, and was not to be directly or humanly approached, but only through the prescribed court etiquette, any deviation from which was a serious offence. It was largely by this court etiquette that the scribal and pharisaic mind lived, and there is no doubt that the emphasis placed on this, the hardness it engendered, and the ideas of the aloofness and majesty of God from which it sprang, were a chief cause of the enmity which Jesus encountered.

The holiness of God has been much emphasised by some teachers to-day, in protest against thoughts of God which seem to turn His love into an easy going, not to say sentimental, amiability. No doubt protest was necessary, but some have gone rather far towards setting holiness and love in opposition to one another, thus confirming rather than correcting the sentimentalism, and introducing an element of artificiality into God's relation with men, not unlike that which bound the Jews.

Jesus undoubtedly thought of God as holy—though He scarcely uses the word—holy, because steadfastly set on one end, and that an end of goodness in which all His children are included.

The end is "His Kingship and His righteousness." Nor is there any suggestion that holiness and love are two opposing qualities which balance one another, or, as it has been put, "the two foci of an ellipse." Holiness and love involve one another. All the ends and methods of God are holy and all are love. That God's love is holy love means that it can never change to anything less. For that reason, if a man sets himself against God—against love, he finds himself unalterably opposed. Yet it is not so much that God personally opposes or punishes the evil doer, as that the man himself, having denied the personal relation (righteousness), finds that the whole purpose of the universe reacts against him. So it was with the prodigal.

This is a conception differing vastly from the formal and legal ideas which Jesus found in possession, and which still colour too much our thoughts about God. Jesus brought God near, if indeed "near" is the right word. He does not define God's being, or indulge in abstractions about Him. He accepts the great Jewish idea that God is one, and worthy of the utmost loyalty of the whole being of man, including all the powers of his intelligence. Once indeed, in the fourth gospel, He seems to come near to metaphysics, when He tells a village woman that God is Spirit, but we see that He was not, for her, putting God farther away, but abolishing the idea of a distant God who could only be found and worshipped in prescribed places and ways, and bringing Him into intimate connection with herself. We have to use long words like immanence and transcendence, but that is our infirmity,

though the words are useful enough, if we do not forget that it is of personality we speak. Jesus can tell us all that and more by saying that even the sparrow that falls, does not fall without our Father.

In such ways of direct simplicity does Jesus seek to make plain to man what was so gloriously clear to Himself, how personal, how intimate, how available, how much concerned with everything God is, and how worthy of our deepest reverence and loyalty. His whole conception of the Kingship and its nearness sprang directly from His vision of God and His deep and radiant consciousness of union with Him in all things.

For us also, a right view of God is to be the beginning. The Kingship of God is not to be established by a long and patient obedience to law which will at last bring us into right relations with God, but by the finding of right relations first of all. We are first to accept Him as the God He is, for the final hindrance is not so much wrong doing as unbelief.

*Let not him who seeks the Father cease until he find Him ; and having found Him, let him be amazed ; and being amazed, he shall reign ; and reigning he shall rest.**

Out of such a conception of God, born of His own conscious fellowship, came the one name, Father, which is ever on the lips of Jesus. It was not an utterly new name for God, but the level of experience it implied was so new that, as a matter of fact, if men think of God as Father to-day, it is mainly because Jesus has taught them to do so.

* *New Sayings of Jesus* : trans. by Dr. Swete.

Jesus, however, poured into the name a fullness of meaning which, even yet, we find it hard to appreciate. He did not regard God in the fashion of many people to-day, as shut up in His own order, Himself evolving through the process of creation, and needing our midwifery that He may consciously arrive. To Jesus, God is present in the world, sharing its life, and seeking expression through the self-consciousness of men, but He is also above it and apart from it, having His own identity as we have ours, the Personal Reality in Whom all truth and love and beauty have their origin. He is consciously creative, and though uniform and constant in His purpose, is able and ready to do new things. He is neither the author of evil nor is He in Himself bound by it.

None the less, Jesus recognised that, if God was not bound, yet at some point or for some reason He held His hand. The parable of the unjust judge and the widow suggests this, but the story of the prodigal leads us to the reason, and gives us in imperishable form the thought of Jesus about God. Neither the son who took advantage of the father's generosity and turned it to evil, nor the son who never realised it, but stayed dutifully at home, received all that the father had to give, for that further giving was on another level of relationship, which had to be seen and realised.

In other words, Jesus saw two orders of being, in either of which man might live. There is the order from which he immediately springs, a general order, in which God is universally kind in His purpose. Without partiality He makes

His sun to rise upon the evil and the good. He clothes the flowers, feeds the birds, recognises the falling sparrow, but does not prevent its falling. In that order He is Father to any man because He is Father to all men, and He works through observed natural laws which, if they serve man, also limit him. If he trespasses, the process which serves him will slay him just as certainly. Such uniformity, we can see, is necessary as a ground of the world's physical life. It is not moral, in any complete sense, but a general moral order can be seen developing through it. It seems all the time to be aiming at what only self-conscious beings can play a proper part in, and the moment such beings arrive a definite moral order takes shape.* It is moral in the sense that it turns against the evil doer, the man who sets out to defy its intention, and everything that lives in it is, in its degree, autonomous. God does not interfere. Man lives in that order as a physical being and can use it. He can use it beyond all other creatures, because he can, by observation, learn how to balance one law by another, and produce effects which, to those on an inferior level of understanding, look like miracles. The whole intention of that general order is good, and there is enough for everybody. The world of daily experience represents our dealings with it.

Jesus, however, saw another level of possibility, because of His vision of God. As neither son in the parable received all the father had to give, so neither those who do not see in the world

* For an excellent treatment of this matter see Halliday's *Reconciliation and Reality*, from which I have here borrowed.

order any Father at all, but only a chance to take and use, nor those who do speak of a Father, but whose relations with Him are confined to what they deem to be His laws, are on the level that Jesus pointed to. The Father of Jesus says, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."

Both sons failed, because they had never realised or made good the personal relation between their father and themselves. Practically he had been to them an impersonal figure, providing or making a demand according to some set system. The returning prodigal did not think that the system could be broken, for he asked to come back as a servant, and the stay-at-home did not think it ought to be. Nor is it broken, so much as transcended in a personal relationship in which its real end is achieved. Assuming that the elder brother did not remain obdurate, there came about not only a new relation of the sons to their father, but a new relation of the father to them, not because of any change in the father's will, but in theirs, making possible a new beginning on a different level altogether, a level from which the father had always desired to act.

The meaning of Jesus breaks through the edges of the parable, for a human father is limited, but God is eternally creative. While our relations to Him are on the impersonal level, either because we do not think of Him as Father, or, using the name, do not yet realise what it means, we are shut up to what we call "the world as we find it," meaning the chain of secondary causes of which we have daily experience, both in the physical and moral realms. Then, either we

deny the possibility of forgiveness and find ourselves in a prison of evil from which there is no escape until we have paid the uttermost farthing (Jesus warned men against that), or accepting forgiveness as something which merely occurs as the climax of an impersonal transaction or process we ignore the possibility of God continuing His creative life and work through men, and rest content with the notion that God is rescuing here and there a number of individuals for fellowship with Himself, here to some extent, but chiefly in another world.

Jesus forgave sins ; He did it with a freedom and a seeming disregard for conditions that is startling, and His emphasis on the need of a thorough-going belief in forgiveness adds point to His actions and shows His firm belief that until men see God as He did, there can be no step on to this higher level. For the unforgiving cannot really believe in forgiveness. They refuse to admit the possibility of a change for the better, or that there can be any resources other than those of the order they are familiar with. In so doing, they fasten themselves in " Karma " (see Matt. v. 25). Yet always forgiveness is looked upon as the clearing out of the way some moral obstruction that prevents the life of God flowing forth in creative power, and the sense of sin is itself such an obstruction until it is seen to be nothing less than the saving and healing presence of God. For this reason Jesus treated sin very seriously. He broke men's chains, and gave His disciples authority to do the same, not that they might carry them round on exhibition for the rest of their lives, but that they might now

become creative in a new personal relation with the Father, or, as it is better to put it, that God might now continue His work through the willing and understanding co-operation of individual personalities, and so bring in His perfect Kingship.

But does not such a conception of God tend to turn religion into magic? There have been many men who have sought to win power to transcend observed natural laws, and many are the means they have used, charms, magic rites, austerities, and even devilries. And possibly there are many who would not go so far, who would yet much rather begin on the physical than the moral side in any sort of re-creation. We need not be alarmed. It is the "impersonal" people who want magic and practise it, not those who know the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This will be made evident enough when we go on to see how the conception of Jesus worked out in practice. It is, indeed, in such a realisation of God that men are to be delivered from that itch after the sham occult which is so prevalent just now, and would drag the spiritual down to the physical level. Jesus is the door to the true occult, "the Mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven."*

God then, is the Father of men on any level, but He is, for those who will accept it, the Father

* It should be added that the "mystery" of the Kingdom of Heaven is an *open secret*. It is not merely for the initiate or religious specialist. The training for receiving all its fulness is the training of daily life, when all the powers of the personality are dedicated, in love, to the service of God, through the service of His children. Jesus took religion for ever out of the exclusive hands of specialists and "opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers." See Hodgkin's *Lay Religion* in this series of books.

He was to Jesus, Holy Creative Love, unconditioned Love. He has His own identity and He respects ours, which He has given us, that we may love also. Such love demands loyal and complete personal relations if it is to be made good. By personal relations, I mean, conscious, freely chosen and covering the whole of life.

It was to this Jesus invited men. Let God be so seen, and truly nothing is impossible, for in such a relationship the creative love and power of God finds no hindrance, nor is there any part of life or personality which remains outside, or any possible division of life into a sacred part which is an acknowledgment of God, and a secular part in which we do the best for ourselves.

It was because Jesus had so seen God that, to the dismay of the professionally religious of His time, He went through the cities of Galilee and proclaimed to their crowds, "The Kingship of God is at hand."

ii.—MAN

When a man calls God, Father, he describes himself as well as God, asserting in effect that "divine" and "human" are not mutually exclusive terms. If God is Personal Spirit—I AM—and also the Father of men, we must think of ourselves finally as personal identities "born of Him in eternity." "*In Him we are.*"

This way of thinking is sometimes dismissed as "merely mystical," but the relationship is fundamental, none the less. It is true that there

are more levels than one from which it may be viewed. We may regard ourselves merely as fractions of some universally diffused Life Force, or principle of existence, who have attained a temporary self-consciousness which will be presently withdrawn. Or we may think of ourselves as permanent points of consciousness in a great universe of life, points, which, taken together, make up the consciousness of God. We may go to the other extreme, and think of ourselves as wholly separate individuals, created from without by some Omnipotent Individual we call God, from whom we must accept whatever He chooses to give. But all these come short of the faith of Jesus. To Him, the whole of man's being is included in his sonship. It is this personal relation which is most truly mystical.

If His consciousness of union with God was such that "Father," upon His lips, became a new name and the passport into a new world, then those to whom He said, "My Father and your Father," must have realised that He saw them in a light in which they had never seen themselves. No one who has not some special theory to uphold can suppose that the words mean anything else than an assurance that the relation which Jesus enjoyed was to be theirs, and that He Himself was the guarantee of that great truth. In another place in the fourth gospel, which, whether it gives the very idiom of Jesus or not, at least gives us His thought, He says that if we will heed Him we shall know the truth, and the truth will make us free. What truth, save the ultimate truth about ourselves and our proper relation to God, which He realised in His

own experience and sought by every means to reveal? "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."

That such a conscious sonship was not the daily experience of men was obvious enough, but that it might be and ought to be was the burden of His message, and coloured His whole view of life and all His dealings with His fellows, on whom He set a value which, even yet, we scarcely appreciate, and only in the smallest way venture to accept in practice. It has been truly said that Jesus thought men worth dying for, but while we cannot easily exaggerate the importance of a fact like that, He showed His sense of their value in ways even less followed. There are many who might be willing to die for their fellows at need, but are not prepared to trust them with freedom, or set them, as human beings, above all rules and institutions and abstract principles, "If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend," is still a word of power amongst us, before which the claims of justice to persons must retire. "Cæsar" stands for many things, some of them bad, some of them good, and worthy of our allegiance and support, but none of them greater than men and women. Such a saying as "The sabbath was made for man," cuts very deep, for the sabbath was held to be not a human but a divine institution; yet even that is not to override human claims. Jesus is against every kind of coercion, and all for freedom, where persons are concerned. He did not use His own power to compel or overawe men, to rush them into a choice they were not ready to make, or to take them along at a faster pace than they were able

to go, for He realised that the good a man does under compulsion is no good to him. He was prepared to take all the risks of trusting men, so confident was He that there is that in them which will choose rightly if it is given a reasonable chance. The father of the prodigal is shown as giving wealth into his son's hand, which he might have guessed would be ill-spent, and letting him go off into the far country without protest. He seems to have expected him to come back.

It sounds extravagant, one may freely admit, but it would be easier to let it go at that if the alternative methods, so long tried, had proved themselves conspicuously successful in producing fine personalities, or an order of society superior to that which Jesus had in view. That, however, can scarcely be claimed. All that they have succeeded in doing is to afford protection for a decent average of unadventurous life, and even that protection has worn rather thin during these last years, in the greater part of Europe. The really fine persons flourish in spite of the world, if they flourish at all, and by means of inward resources, and all those who, whether for good or bad reasons, are insufficiently pliable and cannot be fitted into the prevalent order, are crushed. As for the order of society, there is little need for argument. It is falling to pieces before our eyes.

The seeming extravagance of the view of man which held the mind of Jesus is only apparent, and is due to our supposing that He set this great value and offered these wide freedoms to men as *we* see them. When we are brought face to face with His standpoint and method, our minds break out in a rash of objections and

concrete instances. There is that lazy beggar X, who has lived for weeks on his unemployment donation, which I help to provide, or, it may be, the employer of X, who has done so well out of the war, and grudges a living wage to his employees. There is the man who cheated me so cunningly that I cannot touch him. There are the hooligans who set upon poor little Z and nearly killed him for the sake of an Ingersoll watch and eight and tenpence in small change. There are people who are diabolically cruel to children and animals, people who are incredibly selfish. There are our enemies . . .

Jesus knew all these things. If he did not spend His strength in denouncing human depravity or even in trying to persuade people that they were sinners, it was not that He was blind to evil, and He must have seen much of it, for the indecencies of society were not commonly kept out of sight in those days. He saw these things, but He saw them as part of the evil order in which men were fast, and while He said no word to lessen or deny men's sense of personal responsibility for the things they did, He traced most evils back to the root of self-regarding fear from which they spring. Men are afraid of want, illness, accident, adversity, death, ridicule, misunderstanding, the aggression and greed of others, and they seek their own security in the possession of material things and power over other people. Then, to maintain themselves in that security, they are driven to hardness, contempt, and repression. Thus, by lending their own will to the delusion, they become reasons for fear and suspicion on the part of others.

So the circle continually turns on itself and men fasten themselves so firmly in the prison of evil that even their reason becomes enslaved to it. It is a tragedy which moved Jesus to the heart (see Matt. ix. 36). Men are so great in possibilities, and human life is so splendid in itself, yet their efforts are continually nullified. It is as though the eddies and froth of a stream should succeed in diverting the main current. But seeing that the dreadful power of evil was due to the delusions of men rather than the real facts of their nature, He did not blame them, save where He saw that the delusion was personally accepted and held to. His purpose was to awaken in men not a sense of condemnation, but a sense of hope, "to proclaim deliverance to the captives." All His terrible anger was reserved for the hard-minded and complacent, who were so satisfied with their own narrow virtue and so ready to condemn others. He did not suppose that when a man finds that he is wrong he is likely to be put right by farther condemnation.

If we have doubts as to the wisdom of the method of Jesus, we may compare His success in dealing with evil people and our own. Can we suppose, to take one instance, that the woman who was a sinner would have been better dealt with by a modern magistrate? Jesus saw all that the magistrate would see, but He saw something more. In her, as in all others with whom He dealt, even the complacent and cruel who hid it most successfully, He saw the image of God, the sonship waiting to be claimed, and all His efforts were directed to bringing that hidden thing to birth in a new relation between God

and man. He was under no illusions as to our present experience, but regarding men as essentially free personalities, though at present only free in part, He saw that the possibilities of evil, which He saw achieved, always involved equal possibilities of good, which might be entered upon, not through the painful growth of many generations, but by the realisation now of man's true relation to the Creative Spirit. "If you truly know yourselves, you are sons and daughters of the Father Almighty."* Jesus did not mean that at one bound the final end of man's existence would be reached, leaving nothing more to hope for, but He did mean that at one stroke he might be delivered from fear and delusion, the division due to warring instincts and desires, and all the waste of energy that these things involve, and be able to devote all his latent and developing powers to the highest ends of life. That is the Father's purpose for men. He cannot fulfil it without us, for in man a stage of evolution has been reached in which consciousness and will have taken individual forms, by whose co-operation alone further progress can be made. Sonship cannot grow automatically from the natural order, because it means personal association and fellowship, which, in turn, depends upon personal choice. To over-ride that choice would be to defeat God's ends and our own good, but He waits our choice with every power of love at His disposal.

Jesus saw this so clearly in His own experience that He would almost laugh men into believing it. "God feeds the birds and clothes the flowers.

* *New Sayings of Jesus.*

You are far beyond them in your Father's purpose. He does not care less for you because you have to toil for your living. He knows all you need—He knows every hair on your head. Even you who are fast in evil deal kindly and faithfully with your children. Is God likely to be a less efficient Father? Live as His children, for the true end of your being, and He will look after the rest. Even if men take your life, do not be afraid. They cannot touch *you*. The real you does not live by bread alone, but by the direct word of the Father. He is in you; He cannot forget you, and you cannot be lost."

This may seem very individualistic when measured by some of our present ways of thinking, and there is no denying that on one side of His teaching Jesus laid the greatest stress on individual value and responsibility, almost as though He might say, "Do not be confused by history or public events or class struggle or any big name: it is the individual and the soul of the individual that matters."* And while, as we shall see, there is another side to it, it is true that Jesus never thinks in terms of humanity, or the greatest good of the greatest number, but of men and women. When, in the consciousness of His own deep union—if not identity—with His fellows, He sets Himself beside the least valued, He says, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto *one*. . . ." If, as some suggest, that picture of judgment has reference to nations, then societies which allow themselves to do injustice to individual men and women, in the name of any abstraction or institution or general

* Hugh Walpole: *The Secret City*.

good, have something yet to learn, as have those who suppose that official sanctions can absolve them for evils done to order. In these respects, it must be admitted that Jesus differs from a widely accepted opinion of to-day, though it does not follow that He must be wrong.

But there is another side to the teaching, equally emphasised, though not more kindly to our fears, for here we commonly feel that Jesus is not individualist enough. Not only are we to regard others as having a value equal to our own, but we are given to understand that neither the great possibilities of human nature, nor even freedom itself, can be realised in separation from others, but demand the fullest social life. It is not in private vision or ecstasy, when we are most cut off from the rest of life, that God reveals Himself most fully to us, but when we lose ourselves in union with others. For we find then our own personality given back to us, fulfilled and intensified by the life of the whole, like the separate notes of some great chord. The Kingship of God is the rule of one who is Father ; and it is only as members of a family from which none can be excluded (save by his own act), that we can enter it at all. Only when every prodigal has returned can any one of us know the family life in its fulness. The Kingship of God means God and man at-one, but the life of God is a life of self-giving, and oneness with God will mean the same life for man. The Righteousness of the Kingship of God is not abstract or legal or in any way arbitrary. It is not a balancing of claims ; it is right personal relations with God and all

His children, which in the nature of the case are not private.

We conclude then that Jesus looked upon man not as separated by some gulf of essential nature from God, but rather, as it has been put, that human nature and divine nature are continuous, and that this oneness of nature was the condition which made the Kingship of God possible. Yet man has his own identity. He is created for the Kingship of God. In finding it he is finding nothing alien or artificial or intrusive, but entering upon that which has been prepared for him from the foundation of the world. For purposes of self-discovery and self-realisation man has been created, that is to say, separated, and he has himself carried the separation so far that he has created a delusive order in which he has become bound. Self-hood has become a prison, and possession for self the end of life, so that even religion becomes legal and arid and disappointing. Sometimes men have sought escape in the idea of Pantheism—that God has no identity save in men.* But this is only to bind the delusion faster about us. If self is God, we are still in prison, and without hope. Jesus saw the true relationship, and how it was to be consummated in personal sonship. He saw it because He knew it for Himself, and was able therefore to tell men with conviction that the day of their deliverance was at hand.

* *e.g.* : "We conceive the universe as a spiritual whole, made up of individuals, who have no existence except as manifestations of the whole ; as the whole, on the other hand, has no existence except as manifested in them." M'Taggart, Quoted by Ed. Carpenter).

iii.—ATONEMENT

If the Kingship of God means "God and man at-one," and Jesus thought of God and of man in such a way as we have seen, how did He think of the oneness? In what way are God and man to be at one; and how is such an end to come about? We have already seen that there is a oneness of essential nature which made the offer of Jesus possible—and also made refusal possible. This double possibility is itself the proof that Jesus meant something more than the admission by man of some fact about God and himself, though it is a great moment for anyone when he takes even that step towards reality. It may be said that the putting of a new label on a bottle does not alter the contents; but it alters them for use. You know then what you may expect. The discovery of a beggar that he is a person of fortune would be a better illustration. Had the prodigal never known that he was the son of his father, he could never have been a prodigal in the sense described. But what was it he realised in the far country? Not the bare fact that he was his father's son, but what that really meant, and how foolish he had been to take himself off with the little bit he claimed for his own. Yet he might conceivably have realised all that, and still have remained away in shame and self-disgust. He not only realised the truth about himself, but the truth about his father also, or enough of it to bring him home. On that he made a moral choice, and by his action and the father's response to it he came to an at-oneness with his father which

he had never known before and the home-keeping brother had not yet found.

Here we have the root of the matter. God and man at-one must be a state of reality, in which God and man and life are seen as they are, but no merely mental act or vision will bring us there. It can only be reached by man's own personal choice, for God is always ready. It is not God simply ruling, or man merely receiving, but as Jesus made plain, a personal relation, accepted and lived by, in the assurance that it is accepted by God also; that is, it is no illusion, but reality. When a man lives by truth and love and beauty, as God does, he and God are at-one, not only by a community of nature, but by fellowship, and so throughout the whole range of his being.

It is absurd therefore to say that Jesus never preached atonement. It would be nearer the truth to say that He preached nothing else. He gave Himself up to bringing home to men this possibility, this vision, which He Himself saw, of a Divine Father seeking personal relations with His children, in which all the good He desired for them and which they, however confusedly, desired for themselves, might be achieved. For a right relation with God means right relations all round, the achievement of which is the whole art of life.

Jesus enters into very little detail as to what the good news He had brought included, save as it concerned personal relationships. There is no description of the glories of God's rule on earth, no reference to many of man's activities. He was content to let men fill up the picture for

themselves. The great thing was to get the fundamental relation right, to persuade men that all good was possible, was indeed already existent in God's purpose, and in germ in themselves. Men had lain sighing in a prison of self-delusion, waiting for God to act; the truth was that God was waiting for men to act. The prison door was open; men had but to walk out and take possession. This sounds easy, but really it is difficult, for it means a moral revolution.

Now to show men what they will discover on a complete change of attitude to reality is as difficult as to explain to a blind man how differently he will regard the world when his eyes are opened. If we were convinced that there is latent in him some faculty by which he could attain to vision, if he would but make the venture, the best we could do for him would be to give hints, necessarily inadequate, and by them, and any other available means, encourage him to make the attempt. The first step would assuredly have to be taken in faith.

It was in this way that Jesus dealt with men, seeking to whet their hunger for this good, to fan a discontent with life as they found it into a consuming eagerness for the thing that might be, and a belief that it could be, and so to persuade them of the readiness of the Father to give, and the possibilities of their own nature to receive, that they would make this act of personal choice in a new way of life.

The paradoxes and parables of Jesus are full of this intention. The Kingship of God is to be entered into, yet it is within us. It is God's, but we are to possess it. It is given to us, yet

we are to seek it. We may be quite near to it and yet miss it. It is to come, yet it exists now. It is not of this world-order, yet it is to come on earth. In this way men were invited to challenge all the things they took for granted.

In the fourth gospel the synonym, *Eternal Life*, is commonly used: Life triumphant, creative; Life, as opposed to mere existence; the Life which is the light of men, now manifested in a Son who has power to lead others into sonship. Jesus expresses His own experience of the Kingship of God when He tells us that the Son does nothing save what He sees the Father do; that the Father within doeth the works, that He and the Father are one. In this way He shows us what being a son means.

Now all these varying statements can only be harmonised and realised as descriptions of the same thing when we see that "God and man at-one," in the mind of Jesus means the unveiling in man of the reality of his personality, the bringing to birth of something latent there, by a new relation to God, carrying with it a new order of consciousness, which must issue in a new world-order. To see the Kingship of God is to see that which would "change us in beholding," giving us a new valuation of things, because a new perception of their meaning and relation to reality. There would be a working from within outwards, which would inevitably be expressed in a new way of life.

We cannot give with final precision the order in which these things happen, for we are dealing with persons and not just processes. On the one hand Jesus seems to say, "If you only saw

God as He is, and yourselves as His children, you would choose His way immediately, and casting away your fears, would live on an altogether new pattern, joyfully, and in fellowship with Him and one another. So would His Kingship be established." On the other hand, "If you would choose to do the will of God and would trust yourselves to every impulse of love that rises within you, you would soon find that you had touched reality, and would come into a fellowship with God and your fellows which would banish every fear and open the door to fullest life."

In other words, there are two sides to "God and man at-one," as the words themselves imply : God's offer, which brings to birth a new consciousness, and His demand, which means a new way of life. To some the offer makes the first appeal, to some the demand. Neither would appeal if there were not already some community of nature between man and God, and neither can be realised without man's personal choice. When that choice has been made, and self-hood is cast away, God and man are at-one, in principle at least, and human life, in all its variety, becomes the medium by which the reality we have glimpsed is brought into manifestation. The seed springs up and bears fruit, thirty-fold and sixty-fold and a hundred-fold. Man becomes creative and shares in the Kingship of God. Life becomes, not a bondage to law, but an art in which personality may be freely expressed. The rule of God is found to be not only over us, but in us and through us, a further at-oneness of which the end cannot be seen, and to which no limits can be set.

But before we go farther in our discovery of what Jesus included in His vision of the Kingship of God, it will be well to take up another thread of the story. We have so far considered Him as holding certain ideas about God and man and life, and as having such vision of reality that He could declare it to others. But Jesus did not think of Himself as a teacher only: there is no evading the fact that He associated His own person with the good news in a way that a reasonable teacher would hardly do. The offer He made included in some way the offer of Himself, and could not be accepted if He was refused. His contemporaries were quite aware of this, for it was their great difficulty. The fourth gospel presents the whole story of Christ from this standpoint. The term "Kingship of God" is used but twice, and then only to correct a wrong impression about its meaning. Throughout the gospel Jesus is presented as the unique Son, wholly at-one with the Father (God and man at-one), and manifested in time that He might lead others into that oneness through Himself.

Moderns may perhaps leave out His personal claim more easily, because, on a superficial view, it seems to be one that concerned only His own nation. But that is not so. He avoided calling Himself the Son of David, or even the Messiah, and chose the name Son of Man. It is quite impossible to separate the declarations Jesus made about the Kingship of God and those made about the Son of Man as though they were two separate subjects, and attempts to do so leave the idea of the Kingship without any driving

force. Indeed, we may go farther and say that without Him we cannot understand what the Kingship of God means. What, for example, is the content of the new consciousness to which the words of Jesus point? We can only discover this by seeing what it meant in the Son of Man. Apart from Him we are left open to delusion, as the history of religion shows.

III

THE SON OF MAN

WHAT did Jesus mean when He adopted the singular practice of speaking of Himself in the third person, under the title, "The Son of Man"? I am assuming here that He did speak of Himself, for though that has been doubted, it is not possible to maintain the idea that He was speaking of some other person. What He did mean, we are to see. There is common agreement that the form of the title was suggested to Him by His reading of the Old Testament, and also, though not so certainly, by some of the uncanonical apocalyptic books. It has been said that in Aramaic, the dialect which Jesus spoke, the words can only mean "man," but this again has been shown to be a mistake.* Most scholars give the words a Messianic meaning, so far as the thought of Jesus is concerned. It is not certain, however, that there was a general understanding of that kind, though the same meaning is given in the later apocalyptic books. The Jews, for example, are represented by John as being puzzled and asking, "Who is this Son of Man?" and when Peter announces that the Son of Man is the Messiah, Jesus treats it as a discovery.

* See, for example, Trench's *Study of St. John's Gospel*.

Yet to say that "Son of Man" means, or came to mean, "Messiah" does not take us so far as scholars seem to think, for we have to ask what "Messiah" meant to Jesus. The idea had grown up slowly among the Jews under the pressure of their misfortunes, and they were not themselves all agreed as to just what manner of being the Messiah was to be. Probably the commonest conception in the days of Jesus was that of a mighty warrior, of divine or semi-divine power, who would bring deliverance to their nation. That Jesus did not use the name Himself suggests that He had some other idea about Messiahship which He could express more adequately by the name He chose to use. Also, no doubt, He realised that to begin by claiming a position which carried certain expectations with it would seriously hamper His work. We have to explain "Messiah" by "Son of Man," and we can only do this by finding why "Son of Man" was chosen by Jesus as the least inadequate interpretation of His own consciousness.

We are warned that we must not try to explain these things by using terms which Jesus would not have used, but surely to restrict ourselves in this way is to defeat our purpose. No one can imagine that, when he has counted up and interpreted the Old Testament and other references as they were understood at the time, he has explained the consciousness of Jesus. He chose the title because it was the best He could find, but He so changed it by His life and death as to give it new and greater significance. We are trying to understand, not the words, but the facts of the case, and we can do that best when

we translate them as far as possible into the terms by which we explain our own experience. If we find that the facts are too big, we shall then know where we are.

The Old Testament passages which we may suppose Jesus to have had in mind carry wide human meanings. The Jewish mind used figures and symbols where we commonly use abstract terms. The "one like unto a son of man," in Dan. vii. 13, to whom is given an everlasting kingship, is seen later to be no individual, but "the people of the saints of the most High," a symbol of humanity in contrast to the less than human kingships which had preceded it. The Son of Man in the eighth psalm, who is but little lower than God, is "everyman" in the intention of God. In Is. xxxii. 2, beside the king who is to reign in righteousness, is put "a man," who shall embody a new order. The prophet Ezekiel is given the name "Son of man," as an encouragement to stand for man against all lower claims and powers. We can imagine how all these ideas would appeal to the mind of Jesus.

If the later Jewish writings make the title more officially Messianic, then they may help us to see one of the reasons for the opposition of the Jewish leaders to Jesus. They wanted an official Messiah and Jesus offered a human. That He, "being a man," should make such claims, was to them the last blasphemy. If Jesus was making claims for Himself alone, as a separated human unit, they were right. No such Messiah could even pretend to help them.

All this confirms what we feel instinctively as we read the gospels, that "Son of Man" has

some universal meaning, bound up with what Jesus saw to be the truth, not only about the Messiah for whom the Jews looked, but also about man; that He was not pointing to some essential difference between Himself and others, but starting on the ground of a common likeness and speaking for all. That is the kind of Messiah He would be, not a wonder-worker, not a military leader, not Son of David, but Son of Man, taking His stand upon and making His claim from the essentially human. He would have men start there too. Whatever of God He had to declare was revealed in human terms and its meaning shown in the achievement of a human life and character. If we think that to be impossible, we must revise our ideas about God.

John shows Nathaniel, at an early stage, declaring in a burst of wonder, "Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." Jesus suggests that there are greater wonders yet to be seen, "the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." Nathaniel thought of the official Messiah, for whom such a place as Nazareth was not good enough, but Jesus will put forward no claim that is not human. An official Messiah means an official order, in which man, as man, would be ignored, and Jesus will have none of it. Is not this the reason why some scholars have been able to doubt whether Jesus ever claimed to be the Messiah at all? The Messiah the Jews demanded He could not be, but He believed Himself to be the Messiah, the Christ, of God's intention, to be revealed in human life, and only to be discerned as Son of God when He had been loved as Son

of Man. One may say that the first thing Jesus meant by His choice of name is that, if we want to know God, we must begin to think rightly about man. We must look for Him there.

We may well say that this is difficult. We know a little of ourselves, and we have observed others. We consider the crises of doubt and faith, like the temperature chart of a fever, the stampedes of fear, the ebullitions of vain-confidence, sensual lapses, self-absorptions, which characterise men's common experience. Can we fix any point as normal, and does normal mean divine? No doubt it is the consciousness of such experience which has made men often prefer an official God, if they must have one at all, majestic, as befits Him, but not too near, and to be served in some kind of routine at suitable times and places. God-in-man is too insistent in His demands.

Yet Jesus knew what was in man, and by His humanity. If, after having witness borne to Him that He was the Son of God, He could carry out His mission under the name "Son of Man," it could only be because He felt that He was one with all men, and that His own relationship with God represented the truth about others—not, indeed, what one might call the untruth of their moods, but the reality of their personality, in the birth and realisation of which redemption consists.

If this was not so, if "Son of Man" was merely a temporary accommodation to the company He would keep, like the rags of an amateur vagrant, if it was only one more name for an official Messiah, who in reality is utterly separate from

us, then Jesus has won the hearts of men on false pretences. But the instincts of men are right. They have not given their devotion to a pretence, nor to an official, even a divine official, but to one in whom they see carried to perfection the possibilities of their own nature, yet "in all their afflictions was afflicted," the person they themselves would be if they could or dared, not less human but more human than themselves, and if divine, divine for that reason. The Son of Man therefore is the truth of humanity, the revelation of the fulness of that which makes us human, and so, properly, He is our judge. Because the consciousness of Jesus was of this order, because He realised in Himself, beyond all others, the universal elements in personality—"Before Abraham was, I am"—and our true relation to one another, He has the right to speak for man in his true relation to God, and to make claims upon the devotion to men which on the lips of another would be preposterous. We "find ourselves" in or by Him, and that is judgment.

In the drama of His personal life, as He dedicated Himself to the will of the Father against the false order of His day, in His vision of the Kingship at hand, in the deep joys of His own nature and the sorrows that came upon Him from without, in recognition timidly given or arrogantly refused, in the contempt of those in possession for His human values, in His betrayal and denial by His own, in His suffering and death at the hands of official religion and law, in His victory over death, in the promise of His final victory in mankind, we see set out our own history, the history of God-in-man, of that divine humanity which

goes back to "Adam, who was the Son of God," and stretches forward to the time beyond time, when God shall be all in all.

The key to that history, which is the only kind of history that greatly matters, is given by Jesus thus: The Son of Man has authority. The Son of Man must suffer. The Son of Man is judge. The first He knew; the second He realised; the third was the faith which sustained Him, for it looked to the end in the purpose of God. (Judgment, it may be said, does not mean vengeance, need not mean condemnation, but is the revelation of things as they really are.) All three were truths born of His own consciousness; but are they not the key to human history? Is not the moving, creative element in history that spirit in man which will not be satisfied with evils and limitations, which cannot accept them as final, but must strive and protest and ever assert what ought to be against what it is? He is beset with ignorance, haunted by fears, subject to a thousand perils, but he is created, as he feels, not for slavery, but for freedom and kingship.

Beside man—everyman—Jesus took His stand. He knew "whence He had come and whither He goeth," and so knowing He says, "The Son of Man has authority" to make an end of the evils that beset the race.

The Son of Man must suffer. The tragedy of man is this, that the cruellest opposition to his hopes has come, not from the indifferent forces of nature, but from the Frankensteins of his own creation, systems and institutions which have become ends in themselves, and to which man

has been subordinated until the very thought of his native value has been lost. It is scarcely too much to say that the story of human institutions is that of a continual crucifixion, of which the best in man has been the victim. The whole tale of "man's inhumanity to man" is past the telling. There is scarcely a high name which has not been used in justification. Country, Empire, Religion, Church, Commercial Prosperity, Industrial Efficiency, even Brotherhood—all have been the Messiah of man's deliverance at some time or other. "In their own name men have received them," men who denied the Son of Man, and to them human values have been betrayed and sacrificed. That this long road of sorrow runs through all our history, that those who have oftenest walked it have been saints, discoverers, men and women who asked for nothing better than to serve their fellows, innocent children and simple human folk—the "little ones" Jesus so loved, is the hardest thing in the world to reconcile with any idea of a Father in heaven or the image of God in men, for the complacent and cruel and often religious who justify the process are also men.

Jesus saw all this, and in calling Himself Son of Man He chose His place. It was that of the Servant of God who is pictured in the moving words of Isaiah, who lays aside every mark of privilege and so gives himself up to his fellows that redemption is won for them and through them. The Son of Man must suffer. Jesus heads the procession now, and gives it a new meaning. His cross stands for all time to mark the price of the Kingship of God.

- “ And suddenly I saw
That Piers the Plowman
Was painted all bloody
And came in with a cross
Before the common people,
And right like in all things
To our Lord Jesus.
- “ And then I called Conscience
To tell me the truth.
Is this Jesus the Just, quoth I,
That the Jews did to death ?
Or is it Piers the Plowman
Who has painted himself so red ?
- “ Said Conscience as she kneeled,
Tho’ these are Piers’ arms,
His colours and coat armour,
Yet he that cometh so bloody
Is Christ with His Cross,
Conqueror of Christendom.”

Yet Jesus saw beyond the long and painful way, though to us it often seems endless. If, when the good news was rejected, He took His place with the despised and rejected and was numbered with the rebels, not only in sympathy but in fact ; if He gathered up in His consciousness the untold sorrows of men and upon a cross drew them to Himself, it was not in hopeless resignation. It was not because He could not save others that He would not save Himself. That would be noble, but the facts are more hopeful than that. He believed that the spirit in man which He stood for and named cannot be defeated. It is God’s own image and presence in man, the final measure of everything, and it will persist until all that denies it is shown to be what it is, and “ The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world ” shall be seen upon the throne with

God. Jesus believed that He could lead us to triumph, that He was sent for that end. If the Son of Man be lifted up, He will draw all men to Himself. He did not come to judge the world, but to save it ; none the less, when He has shown to man the truth and value of himself, He has set up a standard which is final. When the Son of Man is lifted up into human consciousness, the Prince of this world is judged. Jesus shows us the one end to which the travail of man must come if He is to escape universal destruction.

History shows us the trial and discarding of one system and method after another, but they have all had this in common, that they have denied the values of Jesus. Yet come to them we must, if Jesus is the Son of Man, for nothing based on untruth, or separation, or domination, or anything else than love, can last. There may be a thousand wrong answers to a riddle, but the only permanent answer is the right one. It was because Jesus realised in Himself the right answer that He called Himself the Son of Man. Nothing that denies Him, nothing that denies human values, can finally stand. The name is prophetic. All that it means was not yet revealed, even in Him who bore it. In some sense He is yet to come. The very sorrow and agony are but the travail pangs of His further manifestation. Yet Jesus has given us the key to our history, for He shows us in Himself its inspiration, which is God in men ; its process, which is a continual struggle against inertia and blindness, but might be, if men would, a joyful co-operation between men and their Father God ; its end, which is man in God.

There is another class in the people, whose idea of Man is confined to all conceptions of the Kingdom of God. In the synagogue we are led up to the point that the Son of Man is the Son of God. In the temple, where the two go together, passing where Jerusalem is gathered away from the Son of God as the Son of Man, we are led up to a point where the Son declares, "I and the Father are one." It is the Son of Man of whom we are to see the Son and seek the Father—this is the point of the Son and not by it. The Jews talked for the most part, as before. To them, as to Jesus, the Kingdom of God means "God and man at one," but in a really different way. Their idea of an eternal man that of a right existence in unbroken power. The Jews did not see or seek to find man by the present world. It was not, however, the failure of the teaching that rendered them, or lack of intelligence, but failure in human sympathy. They could not see man for their system, and because they could not see man, they could not receive Christ nor Christ's Messiah. The Christ man in Jesus is, after his eyes are opened, more of Jesus as a prophet. From that he goes on to say that he must be from God. Surely he would say that he is the Son of Man.* Jesus, in the common, leaves the Pharisees the other side of thatness or wickedness in their form. They go as far as "This man is a sinner; we know not whence he is." They never say "the Christ, the Son of the Father," nor the essence of the good things they perceived to be

* *John 1:51*—*Simon Peter*.

waiting for, because they would not look for them where they were.

We conclude then that in calling Himself "Son of Man," Jesus spoke from some profound consciousness of His own, which was so far beyond individual self-consciousness that He could only express it in a universal name. "Son of Man" is such a name, because it stands for a spiritual consciousness, latent in every man, which is universal rather than individual, and is to come to birth by the awakening of the spirit of God. It was this consciousness—however we may explain it—which enabled Him to identify men with Himself in such a way that a kindness done to them is done to Him, and it was this which enabled Him to make great claims and do great things, at the same time in the Father's name and in ours. He could go beyond the Baptist, the greatest and last of the prophets; He had authority to offer the supreme reality to men, because He realised it in Himself. He is God and man at-one in a human life, that is, all the Kingship of God means now, and the promise of all it is to mean. He is more than the official Jewish Messiah, figure of splendour though He was to be. He is the Christ of God: He is the one proper Captain of our race, the Personality who, by the perfection of His consciousness, is related to us all.

IV

THE KINGSHIP OF GOD IN PRACTICE

It will have become apparent that Jesus, in interpreting "Messiah" by "Son of Man," signified a departure from the common expectations of His time. This is seen further in His unwillingness to be known by the official name in the earlier stages of His mission. That unwillingness can hardly be the invention of writers who set out to show that Jesus *was* the Christ. The populace, at least, was not averse to giving Him the name, and there is something almost uncanny in the way possessed people declare it, but it was so bound up with wrong ideas that its open use by Jesus would have hindered rather than helped His purpose, which was to declare the good news of God, and show in Himself what it really meant. Men must find for themselves who and what He is, and what is the mystery of the Kingship. Hence the paradoxes and the enigmatic method of teaching which He adopted.

Had it been possible for men to receive or enter into the Kingship of God by merely intellectual understanding or assent, a different method would have served, but His appeal was not so much to the reasoning faculty as to the conscience and intuition of men. The truth He

had to give was of the kind which can only be proved in life, and demands for its realisation an attitude of the whole personality. Jesus spoke to "the light that lighteth every man," however dim it might seem to be, and further understanding could only come as some step in obedience was taken. "If any man willeth to do . . . he shall know." Let a man follow on, and all would become his, and by his own personal discovery, which in these matters is absolutely essential, because the Kingship of God is finally personal.

For this reason its revelation could only be made in personal terms, in a person, and the key to all the words of Jesus was, if the Jews could have seen it, before their eyes. If they did not see it, it was not for want of telling. Again and again Jesus points to Himself as the key to all He had to say. It has always been a difficulty that men do not notice how His words and deeds fit together, how the whole life is "without seam, woven from the top throughout," and that He Himself is the greater part of His message. That we may avoid this error, it will be well to see something of the meaning of "God and man at-one" in practice.

It is not for nothing that the first illustration is given in the story of the temptation, for in that experience, the account of which must have come from Jesus Himself, we see Him deciding what it meant to be the Son of God, what the powers of the Kingship were, and how they were to be used. These decisions have the greatest importance for us here, because they clear the ground of certain easy misconceptions.

That "God and man at-one" cannot mean Jewish dominion or a coercive divine autocracy is already apparent enough, but there are more subtle errors which die hard. The union of God and man may be regarded as making possible a kind of white magic, to be used by man for his own private advantage, or as the attainment of a life so fortified by occult powers that it will be beyond any further test of hardship or risk; a life, indeed, after the common conception of heaven, which is based more or less unconsciously on the idea that God, being omnipotent, has a "soft job." Take, for example, this, from a modern book on Mental Science.

All life is growth and a live ideal is no exception. Let it grow. Stretch your imagination to take in all you can. When you find yourself approaching the 5,000 dollar a year mark you have set for yourself, you will find yourself wanting 10,000 dollars. Now don't accuse yourself of never being satisfied. Just rejoice in this evidence of *spiritual* growth and go in to win on a larger scale.*

God and man at-one—and man that one! Is not this simply the conquest, by the self-worshipping order, of religion itself?

On the other side, the history of Christianity has shown the ease with which another notion of the Kingship could arise, when all the emphasis is put upon the demands of Jesus. The ascetic, other-worldly view of life, which tends to despise the body and to count matter as essentially evil, has had many noble as well as foolish representatives.

It is not any kind of over emphasis, but mere laziness and inertia which has made of Christ's

* E. Towne: *Joy Philosophy*. (The italics are, mine.)

great offer the apotheosis of a moderate, decent, blameless life, in the enjoyment of which men seem able to use the astonishing words of Jesus without any sense of their own absurdity.

On all these points the story of the temptation will help us. In the first temptation we find Jesus deciding that He cannot use the powers of which He is conscious merely to support His own well-being, or to serve ends which may be adequately met by ordinary human effort. To meet a natural need by turning stones into bread is mere magic; to draw men to the search for God by means of it is corruption, and the success of such a method would be no proof that God and man are now at-one. They are at one when man has learned to live by the word of God. This might seem obvious, but the instance given above, only one of many in which an easily obtained plenty is the final mark of spirituality, suggests that there are those who still need to learn the lesson. On the other hand, it is not that man is to live entirely by his own endeavours. Man lives by the word of God, and not by bread only. It is man and God in fellowship by the free choice of both, man sharing the divine life, God sharing ours.

It is to be noticed also, that though the tempter's appeal is to Jesus as Son of God, the answer of Jesus is in human terms. The Messiah He will be can claim and accept no privilege which He cannot claim for His brethren.

The second temptation, following the order of Matthew, is also a suggestion to ignore natural conditions and risks, but now to make a display of power which should overawe men into a

belief in the claims of Jesus. There is also the idea that oneness with God should carry special protections to those who sought or had found it. The appeal of the temptation is now to a "word of God," where such special providence seems to be asserted—under certain conditions, but conditions which we can hardly doubt that Jesus fulfilled. That this kind of temptation is real enough, the story of religious life abundantly shows. The Jews are not the only people who have wanted "signs"; a craving for miraculous interventions and providences has been the infirmity of many religious minds, and never more than during the tragic days through which we have so lately passed.

In the early days of the war a bereaved mother passionately accused God of fraud in my hearing, because she had every night read through the ninety-first psalm on her son's behalf, and, on the strength of the very words which the tempter here used, had claimed "by faith" that her boy should pass through the war unharmed. Nor were such cases uncommon.

The answer of Jesus for Himself is that to make such a claim is presumption, and His further answer in practice was to refuse to perform any act of power in order to convince those who doubted His word, or to save Himself. He took all the risks of the way of life which He had chosen.

"God and man at-one" does not mean the over-riding of reason any more than the cessation of effort. It is not magic, nor is it, in the common use of the word, supernatural,—meaning unnatural. No one is to be hypnotised into

acceptance. No one is to be coerced into a position he is not ready to take. Not even at our own earnest prayer will God do that for us. He comes to us first of all through such of our faculties as are awake. If we respond, He comes to us further through their fuller development—"to him that hath shall be given"—and further still by the quickening of faculties that have lain asleep, by the quickening and birth from above of that which is latent in our personality. Throughout all, it is no more unnatural than the crowning of the plant by its flower, which no one without experience of flowers would ever expect from observation of the plant.

But if our personality is not to be overborne before God can come to us, a like principle holds good in our demand of what God shall do for us. We must always be prepared to take the whole risks of our position, and not be afraid of them who can kill the body. They must be real risks, not theatrical ones, and this means that those who share in the Kingship of God must not expect some sort of miraculous protection which is denied to others. They must not want to take risks and yet not to take them.

Then what remains? The common answer of men, especially of men who are set on accomplishing something in the world, is that you must look after yourself, and use any method that will succeed, without too many scruples about it. You must do as you can, not as you would, the assumption being that the world cannot be run on what are called "ideal" lines. If Jesus was going to be Son of Man, and if "God and man at-one" did not mean either supernatural

provision or protection, then the only thing left is to compromise with evil and turn it against itself. Love and truth alone cannot be lived by, for the evil merely take advantage of them. You must have some appearance of success, or no one will listen to you. That is the meaning of the third temptation.

Consider the example of those expert in the art of government. Men are bribed by what look like free gifts, they are overawed and hypnotised by a display of power, by uniforms, decorations, titles, discipline, government etiquette and so forth. If these fail, there are still the subtle ways of diplomacy, the juggling with laws and legal procedure so that people of insufficient knowledge or pliability are easily put in the wrong; the appeal to what may be called "crisis loyalty," which generally means that men are to shut their eyes while something is done which everybody knows is evil; the continual appeal to the selfishness of men by promises which turn out to have another meaning when they are claimed; and, in the last resort, repression by secret or open methods, the appetite for which grows with what it feeds upon, since it is always able, for a time, to secure some superficial success.

There is a way of thinking which seems to justify these methods. If the end is a good one, good for the greatest number, will not men forgive the method when the end is reached? (Our memories are notoriously short on such matters.) Is not the alternative to leave them to worse evils, without the hope of any good at all? Must we not use the weapons the world

provides, and deal with fools according to their folly?

Jesus saw that such an argument is false, false by all human values, false by the end He had in view, false by what He saw to be of God. His answer was, in effect, the denial of that order to which He was pointed. He did not admit its reality. He did not covet its illusory glories. He would not use its methods or seek its help. He chose another way, longer, and seemingly attended with greater risks. It seemed to be the way of human weakness, but Jesus chose it because He saw it to be what Paul calls "the power and the wisdom of God."

"God and man at-one" means a willingness to do God's will by God's way, to ask nothing for self, to take risks, to go the long way round, to co-operate and to seek co-operation in the greatest adventure there is. In choosing as He did, Jesus shows not only a devotion to God's will, but the loftiest view of human personality. And in making such a choice He gave an altogether new value to the idea of Messiahship, as interpreted by the title "Son of Man."

What had Jesus left then, to enable Him to set out on so great a venture? He had refused things that might have made Him seem staggeringly superhuman; He had denied Himself to those things upon which men who desire power and success are commonly led to depend. What remained? His vision of God, clearer than ever, now that His decision was made, and His consciousness of oneness with all His brethren. Not of God as omnipotent force which would yet crush all opposition, but of God as He might

be manifested in human life, God as omnipotent love, Who would use all His resources in winning men to an acceptance of the goodness which He is. That is to say that "God and man at-one" is no lonely heroic endeavour to see and do the will of God at all costs, but God co-operating with man, acting in and through man, according to the measure of His personality and the vitality of His faith. Omnipotent power is with him, but it is the power, not of coercion, but of love. It was that power which Jesus consistently displayed.

What a man can see of reality, he can make his own, and if he be utterly devoted, can manifest in action. Jesus, as Son of Man, a perfect person, having no private ends to serve, had authority to speak for reality beyond all the sons of men, and He makes it clear in practice, as well as in words, that there is power within reach—the power of love—waiting man's call upon it, and that while he must meet evil with good and take the risks that this involves, yet evil of any kind is no part of God's intention for us—that is, of reality—any more than a machine accident is part of the intention of the inventor. If there are evils in the world against which we cry out, it is not that we may stagger dreadfully in the dilemma between God's lack of power and want of love. It is not that He is withholding His hand in some arbitrary way, but that He is Himself involved in the sorrow of it, doing something which demands limitations akin to the rules of a game. "It is not that He cannot move the chessmen as He pleases, but if He does so, then there can be no play."* "To God all

* Tagore : *Sādhana*.

things are possible," says Jesus, but to the thousand and one questions which spring to our lips He gives us the answer in His attitude to life and death. The omnipotence of God which Jesus reveals is love, which, being "a moral value set on man as being made in His image,"* will never coerce.

Yet if there are evils in the world so complicated in their origin and so far-reaching in their effects that they are beyond immediate dealing with, and must await united goodwill, there are others of a more immediate personal kind, and here we find Jesus acting as we might expect. Among such evils He reckoned some kinds of disease, mental and psychic disarrangements, and sins. These evils stand at different levels of personal responsibility and, in the main, touch different areas of our nature, but they have this in common, that they mark some lack of at-oneness between God and man, and it is from this standpoint that Jesus deals with them.

It is perhaps doubtful whether Jesus made the sharp separation between body and soul that we often do, even though we can find words of His which seem to suggest it. He dealt with the whole man as a person, body being "that portion of soul discerned by the five senses,"† and He always sought to enter into personal relations with those whom He helped, to awaken faith, and to co-operate with them rather than merely to act upon them. In the case of the paralytic, for example, Prof. Findlay tells us

* Oman: *Grace and Personality*.

† William Blake.

that Jesus "reinforces the man's personality first by a sentence of forgiveness, then used his restored self-respect and peace of mind to co-operate in the healing of the body." Sin and disease are alike looked upon as abnormal states belonging to the false order in which men are fast. There is no single case in which physical or mental suffering is regarded as being in itself wholesome, to be borne for the good of the soul. Rather, men and women have been "bound by Satan." These evils are the fruit of the delusive order, and the works of God which Jesus did, because He saw the Father doing them, are those of deliverance. Of the cases of possession which He healed He says, "If I by the spirit of God cast out demons, then is the Kingship of God come upon you."

It is quite impossible to cut out of the story all that is told us about this side of the work of Jesus without mutilating it. Jesus made it plain that there was available, even under present conditions, a sufficient fountain of livingness and love, holiness and sanity, and that this was a token of the nearness and reality of the Kingship of God.

But if, in such cases, we see that Jesus was moved by some other conception of God and man than those amongst whom He served, the fact becomes more obvious still when we discover that His success as a healer became an embarrassment from which He had to seek escape. We get in Mark's story the glimpse of a crowd of diseased and disabled people swaying and struggling with their friends to lay hands upon Jesus, until He was well nigh overwhelmed. It

is not at all like the picture books. This is what they made of the healing, a thing to be snatched and got away with, without regard to the greater purposes of Jesus. He has not come for that, however, but to declare to men God's offer and to encourage them to seek it for themselves and find, with it, every other good.

It has been suggested that Jesus thought little of His miracles, indeed, was rather ashamed of them. There is no real ground for supposing this, but He was ashamed of the way in which they were received. He regarded the forgiveness of sins, and personal relations with Himself as of so much greater importance, that any other gift was of small value apart from them. Yet to say this is not to belittle the great thing that Jesus shows us. A modern New Testament scholar has declared of the gift of healing, that "our almost complete lack of it is the most ominous sign of our failure to make the treasure of His grace our own."*

"God and man at-one" means an open and unobstructed channel of life and power between man and God. If there is any hindrance it is not on God's side. It means, as we have seen, the power, according to our faith, to go beyond secondary causes, in which we seem to be shut up—"Fast bound in sin and nature's night," as the hymn puts it—to original, creative love, and so the breaking of that net of evil and falsehood which man has woven about himself. Does that include the power to heal and to remit sins? Ultimately there can be no answer save, "Yes, when we have sufficient love," even

* J. A. Findlay: *Jesus as they saw Him*.

though we condemn ourselves in so saying. The community which Jesus founded was to do such things, and for long years it did them.

That the Kingship of God means a life of active love, is shown also in a way which seems to have scandalised the pious of His day as much as anything Jesus did, and well nigh as much as His assumption of authority. To them, as to many people still, a concern about God meant the condemnation of and withdrawal from certain ranges of human activity, and separation, so far as was possible, from those who lived on these inferior planes. This may spring merely from fear of life, a weakness to which people whose goodness is largely negative seem to be liable, but it may be due to a philosophy, a definite view of God and man in which spiritual and material are mutually exclusive terms.

There is nothing about Jesus to give encouragement to such an attitude. The world from which Jesus would deliver us is not the world of natural human life, nor even the world of nature as an evil thing, but, as we have seen, the world of delusion which has come about through man setting up his separate self-hood against God, which has turned both nature and human life into a bondage. The sphere of normal human life is that in which the Kingship of God is to be manifested. The parable of the Talents makes that plain, and the whole attitude of Jesus. He is Son of Man. We see Him frankly accepting life and keenly interested in ordinary men and women. He never wanted them to be less human. There is no trace in Him of the superior person, nor anything to suggest the rather

uncomfortable self-consciousness which so easily overtakes us when we get outside the shelter of our own special circle. He dealt quite simply with men, where and as He found them, and never treated them as less than persons—or more.

That Jesus showed a wise and deeply sympathetic understanding is shown by the way men and women sought Him out. What kind of a person is He who can be at home with publicans and outcasts, make them feel at home with Him, and yet search them out as He did; whose love was so cleansing that a woman of evil repute can wash His feet with tears; who is awake to all the homely and lovely things of which ordinary life is made up, alive to the value and beauty and sacredness of ordinary things and common men and women in a way which was unique, and found all this to be, not merely no barrier to His consciousness of union with God, but part of it, and its very means of expression?

Least of all does Jesus give any encouragement to the idea that "God and man at-one" means a purely individualistic piety, which is content to save its own soul, or to preserve a private state of religious emotion which is only related to daily life as an anodyne.

We can say of the Son of Man, as of no other, that He lived by and for love. He showed the world, as no one else has ever done, not only what that sadly misused word means, but also that it is the only way by which we can enter into that perfect consciousness in which our real life consists.

The final illustration of the Kingship of God in practice takes us to the days of the cross. Before we can properly consider that, we must look at the things which made such an end necessary. It may be well, however, at this point to sum up what we have learned of "God and man at-one" in the practice of the Son of Man.

"God and man at-one" means a willingness to do God's will in God's way, without bribery, without supernatural protections, yet wholly in dependence on God, and on nothing else.

On the other hand, it means not only that man is to co-operate by willing choice with God, but that God will co-operate with man. All the loving power of God is at man's disposal as He is able to receive and use it for God's ends.

"God and man at-one" means therefore a new order, a breaking of the net of delusion and fear which holds man in bondage, and to which he has largely given his consent, but not a denial of or contempt for nature, normal human life, or any human being. Rather it carries with it the realisation of union with all men and all life, the capacity to see God everywhere, to live consciously in God, and at the same time, "in our brother's bosom."

V

THE OFFER OF JESUS

WE have now to ask the question, what, along with Himself, did Jesus offer to His nation? What good things are included in the Kingship of God? In what way was it at hand? What would have happened if the Jews had accepted Him and it at His own valuation?

To some extent the question has already been answered. We have seen, within limits of which the writer is keenly conscious, how Jesus thought of God, of man, of the possible relationship between God and man, and how Jesus illustrated this in Himself and His work. All He was and said and did were but varied ways of making this offer to His people. We can but bring these things into more definite shape in our minds, that we may see the whole great drama more clearly.

We may say that Jesus offered to His generation all He had, and on the same terms by which He lived Himself. He offered :—

The reality of God in a new relationship, personal, filial, freely chosen; the personal relationship of Father and children in all the fullest meanings we can put into those words. In an elementary yet fundamental sense, that

relation was already there, but it was veiled by delusion—self-delusion—on the part of man.

This new relationship includes :—

A new kind of consciousness, a re-birth on another level by the unveiling within human personality of some faculty or power hitherto latent, but now quickened by union with the Divine Spirit ; an opening to reality therefore, in which delusion would disappear, and fresh channels between men and the creative love of God would be opened. God would be free to express Himself fully through men. Man would be creative.

A new relationship to all men and all life. In Blake's words, the door of perception being cleansed, everything would appear as it is, infinite. An overcoming of barriers in which self is not just lost, but lost and found again transfigured. An end of fear, separation, domination. Not a "happy mass," as it has been called, but differences rejoiced in, because transcended in fellowship and the joy of service.

A new order, "the regeneration," in which man would share the Kingship of God, and every disability springing out of wrong relations with reality would disappear.

Jesus offered these things in Himself, and with Himself, as having this consciousness, as realising in Himself the truth of God and man, not only in mind, but in being and life. This was His authority. This made Him the true Messiah, the Son of Man who was to be seen as the Son of God. Conscious that God and man were one in Himself (I and the Father are one), He could speak for God, act with authority, bestow

authority. To deny Him was to deny that which He was. To reject Him was to reject God who had sent Him.

It may be asked, why this need of a mediator? Why cannot God act directly? One can only say that on the human plane there is no other way for God to act directly than this. With the bringing of men into being as distinct personalities, unconscious evolution is ended. God must now act through persons, and coercion is shut out by the end which, so far as we can see, He has in view. If God were to act upon men by omnipotent power, we should be but puppets, however subtly it was done. How else could God make to men an offer, show to them the possibility of a great advance, make the willingness of His love credible against the persuasions of an evil order in which they had bound themselves, make them an offer which could be seen and freely chosen, save through a person who showed these things in Himself? Above all, how could He speak to a nation, a race? There is no other way save by some form of magic or coercion, and when we see Jesus definitely dismiss those methods, we recognise something so outside of common human ways up to that time that it strikes us as authentically divine.

Now such an offer as I have outlined does, if we take it at its face value, seem overwhelming, and especially in view of our experience since. We feel like Nicodemus: how can these things be? Our natural tendency, even if we would fain believe, is to cut down the great words to what seem to us more credible dimensions. Yet I have tried to state soberly what I cannot escape

from. Such things were, I am convinced, offered by Jesus to His nation. It was the nation He addressed when He declared that the Kingship of God was at hand. The things He spoke of could not be fully realised by individuals alone, and even now cannot.

But meanwhile individuals were to be won, won to faith, to a joyful measure of present experience, and to a great hope. The experience was of a new relation to God as Father, involving a new way of life in which the delusive order is denied and transcended. (It is this way of life which is described in the Sermon on the Mount.) This experience would be the "earnest" of the new consciousness, a sense of personal union in love with God and all men. The hope was for the race and the fulfilment of all things, which would now be no longer incredible, for it would spring from the experience, added to the knowledge of Christ Himself. Thus every individual won would become at once an ardent propagandist of the good news, and every circle of fellowship and service a prophecy of the day when the body of the Son of Man would be the whole nation, and at length the whole human race.

That our Lord hoped for some such result is shown in various ways in the story, and that He was disappointed does not prove Him a false prophet, because prophecy is conditioned, not by time, but by moral choice, otherwise we are back in the realm of coercion. When Jesus sent out the twelve (Matt. x. 5ff.), with counsels which bear all the marks of urgency, it was not because the Kingship might be thrust upon the nation before men had time to prepare for it. The

urgency was of another nature. Such a parable as that of the Widow and the Unjust Judge might even suggest that God was holding back, and that urgent prayer might win him to action. That however is superficial. The often forgotten question with which the parable concludes, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" suggests something quite different, as though Jesus said,

"Pray? Yes, pray with all your hearts, and never cease. But if merely beseeching God would bring the Messiah to your rescue, would He not have been sent long ago? Even an unjust judge will give way to persistent asking. But would you recognise the Son of Man if you did see Him?"

The urgency in the mind of Jesus was not because God might act before they had time to make ready, nor that a sufficient force of supplication might be able to prevail upon God to act. God was ready; He had taken the initiative; the Kingship was at hand. The urgent thing was the creation of faith, the need of which He continually insisted upon.

Now the promises made by Jesus to faith are so many and so definite, and apparently so incredible, that it is well to understand, if we can, what He meant by it. A mere mental capitulation to the statement of another, or even the registration of some conclusion we have reached by argument cannot serve as descriptions of faith as Jesus spoke of it. Faith to Him was something much more vital. A mustard seed is small, but it is alive, and it carries the mustard tree within it. "Believe," said Jesus, "that you

have it, and you will get it." Paradoxical it is, no doubt, but how can one better describe the vision which sees past secondary causes, which depend upon one another, to the creative energy of God? Faith like this goes beyond the temporary and the delusive, and lays hold on reality, the reality of God, which is always pressing upon us, seeking fuller expression, and always waiting for our insight and co-operation. But neither insight nor co-operation are possible to the man who is bound in self-hood. In simpler words—only so familiar that we do not give them their value—faith is a vision of God as our Father, and of His unfailing purpose of goodness. There is no real good that we can conceive that He does not desire us to have and has not set at our disposal, but we have to make it ours, or it would not be a good at all. Such faith is not independent of reason, nor of evidence. We have evidence in ourselves, balanced by many fears, so that we do not dare to trust it, but Christ Himself, because we cannot dismiss Him as an illusion, is the supreme evidence.

It was because He was such, that He preached the good news and said, "Come unto Me." By word and deed, directly and through His disciples, He sought to create expectancy and to kindle faith. Those who accepted Him were to become propagandists by word and in their way of life, until a progressive leavening of the whole nation should create a condition of openness to reality to which God could respond. Had the nation recognised and accepted God in Him, such a condition would have been achieved. They would have come into such a relationship with

the Father as Jesus showed, complete personal relations with God and one another. The universal nature of the Son of Man would have been seen, and His victory, which is the victory of God and man together, would have been manifest in some great rise in the level of human personality, akin to the step from consciousness to self-consciousness, but a further advance. In that universal consciousness God and man would be at one, the Kingship within and the Kingship without would be the same, and with the burning up of all the delusions of this self-order, and the setting of all things in their true place, a new age would have been ushered in.

One struggles with words here, but the gospels do represent Jesus as making such an offer, as cherishing such a hope, and being grievously disappointed when He was refused.

II

Why was Jesus refused? The simplest answer, of course, is to lump all the conditions together and label them "sin," but we must do better than that. I am not sure that we have yet earned the right to throw stones at the Jews, but perhaps for that very reason we may examine with care the causes for their rejection of such an offer as Jesus brought them. Some of them are clear. The bitter resentment of the temple officials against the action of Jesus in sweeping out their profitable trade, or, at least, making a demonstration against it, is but the alarm and anger of a vested interest, and with that we

are familiar enough. Jesus threatened their dividends. Other causes are not so easily read. It is difficult to know how far this or that party among the Jews would have been willing to use Jesus to further their own ends, had He been subservient enough, but there seems to have been a section amongst them, or at least a considerable body of loose opinion that would have rallied to Him had He cared to lead a political revolution. They were disappointed in Him. People who are always ready to turn to violence whether for purposes of "freedom" or coercion, have little use for Jesus. They cannot make out what He would be at.

But we may say that of all of them. They realised very soon that the point of view, the ends and methods of Jesus were alien to theirs, and that there would not be room for both. They went to the lengths they finally reached by quite imperceptible steps, because the presence and claims of Jesus forced upon them the logic of their position. At last they felt there could be no quarter. The things we see in them are hardness and blindness. Humanly, they were hard, having no regard for men and women as such. The stories of the man with the withered hand and the woman taken in adultery make that evident. That spirit of hardness was the one thing that roused Jesus to anger and filled Him with shame. It is a sin for which men must be held directly and personally responsible. Had they been willing to see men and women as persons like themselves, there might have been hope that they would have gone on to see Jesus, and what He meant, and then to see God.

They never saw Jesus, save His outward form, which was that of a village carpenter who was far too ready with His impossible ideas. They were locked up in their system; they lived by it and were quite satisfied with it, quite sure that it represented the mind of God. They had different standards for other people, who had no right to the things they claimed for themselves. They wanted credit even for their privileges.

In all this we can see a state of mind not unknown to-day. As individuals the Jews may have been respectable and religious people. Very likely they were. It was not so much their private lives as their class attitude that was wrong. As a class they were blind. They saw neither God nor man in reality, but only as they wanted to see them. They saw no revelation in Him who called Himself the Son of Man, but only a dangerous freethinker who mixed up God and Himself and common people in a way that was perfectly blasphemous. They refused one who made God like that, who forgave and healed with no regard to the merits of the persons concerned, and moreover, had such small respect for their merits, of which they were so conscious.

Jesus said they were blind. The world in which they lived was unreal. Others shared it with them, for what they were fast in was the evil self-order from which He sought to deliver men. But these men were religious leaders, blind leaders of the blind, and content to be blind. Publicans and harlots were nearer to reality, for they were at least dissatisfied. The

Pharisees claimed that they saw, and being quite satisfied, refused Jesus.

Sin, the state of soul out of which sins arise, is refusal, refusal to trust the small intimations of reality in ourselves of which Jesus is the explanation; refusal to face the truth about ourselves or our world, the truth that the Son of Man has opened to us; refusal to see anything that we do not want to see. Such refusal springs from an exaggerated value of the separate self, which seems threatened by these intimations of reality, and in its fears prefers to build up an unreal world of protections. Men shut themselves up in their system, not realising that they are shutting God out. Sin is persistence in that delusion, and becomes even a pride in the evil order from which Jesus offered release.

Jesus saw this definite refusal of Himself crystallising into action, and prepared Himself to meet it. There came a point at which He saw that all He had said to men and all that He had shown them in Himself would not avail to open their eyes. Something more was needed, some final demonstration of the truth to an unbelieving world. He recognised, in the purpose of the Jewish leaders, the occasion to be provided, and "from that time" His efforts were largely directed to two ends; first, the preparation of His little group of disciples against the thing that was to happen, and second, the solemn warning of the Jewish people against the crime into which they were drifting. It has been pointed out how many of the later parables strike the note of estrangement and separation,

suggesting how keenly Jesus felt the widening breach between Himself and His nation.

There is one side of the preparation of His followers which shows how far even they were from realising the conception of their Master. Despite Peter's confession that the Son of Man is the Son of God, Jesus has to tell him that He is still fast in the old order. God and man are not at-one in Peter yet. The subsequent squabbles among the disciples must have wrung the heart of Jesus. None the less, three of them, in a moment of exalted consciousness, are given a glimpse of some higher range of being in which Jesus is at home, doubtless to prepare them for the further things He had to say.

He was to die, not because He could not escape, but because only so, in face of His nation's refusal, could God and man be at one. His acceptance of the cup was, as Mr. Clutton Brock has said, "His answer to the Divine perfection." What refusal meant must be made clear to men, and what the Father's passion and end and method. As Son of Man, now seen by His followers to be Son of God, He had spoken and acted with authority. He and the Father had been at one in all things; He had done only what He saw the Father doing. He would continue. He would still make an appeal to the nation, but the end was certain.

Yet they were not to be discouraged; He was but going "to receive a kingship and return." They had already seen some higher order of being shine through His earthly lineaments. He would pass through death, but He would return.

They would know His presence again in the Spirit, creating a oneness with God which, when perfect, would enable them to see Him, no longer in the limitations of the flesh, but as He is. There would be times of tribulation, all the outworkings of the delusive order which men cling to, but a day of victory would come, when the Son of Man would be revealed on the "clouds of heaven," the sphere of spiritual reality to which He belongs.

This must mean, if our interpretation of the name "Son of Man" is a true one, that all men will be concerned in that revelation, for He is the truth of every one of us. The reality of the Son of Man is not just a separate individual present to the eyes of men as Jesus of Nazareth, but the reality of us all, to be discerned by all of us in each other. What men will make of that manifestation will depend upon themselves. To those who have recognised the Son of Man, and have served Him in the service of their fellows, it will but be the fulfilment of their highest hopes, but those who in hardness have denied themselves to their brethren will find that they have cut themselves off from the life of the new age.

Such a revelation of reality to human consciousness Jesus saw as the "consummation of the age." It was for those who believed Him to trust Him through death and beyond, and to do His bidding with the hope in view that they would yet drink together with Him the new wine of the Kingship of God.

NOTE ON APOCALYPTIC

Much of the later teaching of Jesus, both to His disciples and to the Jewish people is in the strain called Apocalyptic. (An apocalypse is an *unveiling* or *revelation*.) It has been the ground of much divided opinion. A good deal of current teaching about the Kingship of God simply ignores it, either on the ground of some theory, or because it seems irrelevant or even impossible.

To ignore it, however, seems scarcely the way to understand Jesus. If such things were said by Him at all, they mean something, and if they were said under the shadow of a death which He was going open-eyed to meet, they are likely to mean a great deal. If Jesus had, like the poet Blake, invented a highly complicated symbolism of His own to which He had forgotten to supply the key, then we might have to do as most of us do with Blake, skip a great deal, trusting to patches of plainer speech to provide the meaning. But it is not like that. Jesus was using an accepted symbolism, and His words are all personal, that is, they centre round His consciousness as Son of Man, and are concerned with His future action. If we take Him seriously as Son of Man, which this book is an attempt to do, then to ignore what He said about the future and His share in it is to ignore the question, Does the offer He made to His nation still stand?—the thing, that is, we set out to discover.

It is true that many scholars think that the thirteenth chapter of Mark's story does not properly belong there, but is a Jewish apocalypse

which has been adapted and inserted by a later hand. Certainly Matthew and Luke take greater liberties with it than with anything else in Mark's account of Jesus. But even if we allow that, of which there is no direct proof, or, as is not unreasonable, allow that there might be a tendency to misunderstand or even to supplement the actual words of Jesus in the direction of a common habit of thought, there is still enough left to give us pause before we pass on.

One difficulty is the language used, a difficulty aggravated by the appalling literalness with which words have been weighed, times mapped out and dates fixed. We have only to see how Peter interpreted similar language on the day of Pentecost to know that such a method is wrong. Is it not to make the very mistake the Jews made about the Messiah, so shutting themselves up in literal and mechanical notions that they never saw Him when He did come? If Jesus had wished men to understand that He would return to earth as a semi-physically constituted individual, attended by unimaginable splendours and with authority to deal out judgments, and that this would occur without warning on some definite date which was settled by God—but in the life-time of His hearers—He could have said so much more plainly than He did. The fact that He did not suggests that He did not mean it, and that the use of symbolical language was necessary to picture something independent both of time and space, and concerned with the realm of human consciousness, in such ways as have already been mentioned. He uses the apocalyptic language, because that

best expressed His sense of another order of reality and glory interpenetrating this visible order and waiting to break through it, and His belief that all upheaval and change provided a great opportunity for men to enter upon that new order, but He interprets that language, as He has already interpreted Messiahship, by His consciousness as Son of Man. We must not do less.

A further difficulty is that of time. As we have seen, unless we are to have coercion, any prophetic statement is conditioned by the moral choice of the people concerned. Such a statement as "one will be taken and the other left," suggests that vision is dependent on fitness. The time difficulty, however, is largely bound up with the notion of suddenness. To many people, no doubt, the idea of a change in the direction of the world's affairs, a "winding up" of the present order of things, a judgment, is merely absurd, though perhaps even they scarcely contemplate the idea of the earth going on eternally as it is now. Even physical science suggests that such a thing cannot be. What then is their alternative? At some point or other already, the step from merely animal consciousness to self-consciousness was taken. Is that not a parable? Will the next step take place as the moral choice of men, or will some outside force jump us into a new condition, after the style of Mr. Wells' story?*

The moral choice of a handful of people in 1914 plunged the world into conditions of which we by no means see the end. The refusal of

* *In the Days of the Comet.*

the Jews changed the course of human history. But if there has been a refusal, may there not be an acceptance. Benjamin Kidd assures us that the standpoint of a nation may be completely changed in one generation, and gives good reasons for his faith.*

The New Testament looks for God's response to man's choice, the idea being that, just as when the Son of Man was manifested in the flesh there were those who "saw" Him, because of their readiness, and as there are those who "see" Him in the gospels now, and realise Him in themselves and others by the same readiness, there will come a time when this perception and readiness will be so widely spread and so intense that a further manifestation in consciousness will be possible. That there may be those so unready as to be left out is a possibility which Jesus contemplates. "Ye shall not see Me . . . till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

It may be an odd coincidence that many people are telling us to-day, for quite varied reasons, that we are on the eve of a radical change in the nature of human consciousness. If such a change means that we shall see things now hidden from our eyes, it will be, so far, a day of judgment.

This reading of the words of Jesus is confirmed by the fact that in the fourth gospel we have, in place of the apocalyptic chapters of the synoptists, the discourse of Jesus to His disciples on the eve of His betrayal. Whether we regard these chapters as a literal reproduction of the words of Jesus, or the translation of His

* *The Science of Power.*

thought into terms which would be less open to misunderstanding by a Greek reader, we have but to look beneath the surface to see the same essential ideas that the apocalyptic deals with. Jesus is leaving them as a physical presence, but only that, having finally dealt with the "world," He may return in new, more universal ways. He will return first of all, and for always to those who love Him, in the Spirit. They will be persecuted, troubles will abound, but they are to be faithful, true always to Him and to His law of love. He will manifest Himself to them and to all who are with them in union with Him. Where Mark speaks of the gathering of the elect, John's report speaks of oneness in Christ, like His oneness with the Father. The signs of summer that Mark mentions appear in John as the fruit-bearing of those who are consciously united to the Living Vine. The coming is a perpetual coming, independent of space or time, and yet there will be "that day" when they will know their true relation to Him and His to the Father.

I have dwelt on this matter as a plea that we should not decide off-hand that the words of Christ about His final victory may be ignored, either because of the disappointed expectations of the early church, or the fact that these sayings, along with others in the New Testament, have become the hunting ground for literalists. The "advent hope" despite misunderstandings, was the driving force of the early church, and rightly interpreted, would be so still. If men have merely some indefinite end in view, the raising, let us say, of humanity to the *N*th power of brain

development, a height in which they have no personal concern, then most folk will continue to do what they do now, sit well back and let someone else do the pulling. Jesus had quite another message. His refusal of the overtures of the prince of this world meant that He saw another order waiting upon men's acceptance, and to be realised by His moral choice in a life of love. The true march forward can only begin when that gift of God has been received. Meanwhile we build Babel.

VI

THE FINAL ILLUSTRATION

" Pilate and Caiaphas
They have brought this thing to pass,
That a Christ the Father gave,
Should be guest within a grave,
Church and State have willed to last
This tyranny not over-past.

ARTHUR SHEARLY CRIPPS.

WAS the cross an afterthought on the part of Jesus, His way of going forward heroically to the end in the teeth of a cruel disappointment, or did He see it lying ahead from the very beginning? If He foresaw it in that way, then it could only be by some supernatural prevision, which in turn means that it was all ordained of God, and that in no circumstances could things have been different. So to believe takes at once all reality from the offer Jesus made to His nation. The whole story suggests the keenest disappointment on His part. The cry over Jerusalem is not the cry of one who had made a formal offer—however sincere—which He knew beforehand could not be accepted, but the outbreak of heart-broken love, echoing, one must believe, the love of the Father in whose name He had spoken. Prevision Jesus had, but was it not the prevision of personal at-oneness with God rather than secret information about some pre-ordained course of things? As a possibility, the end may

well have been before His eyes from a very early point in His ministry. He did not choose His way in the wilderness without knowing what it meant, and His references to the death He was to meet suggest that He had often brooded over the picture of the Servant of God in the words of Isaiah, and had seen there the way in which He must be ready to walk.

Was the cross then necessary? If by "necessary" is meant that God had ordained the whole of the circumstances which culminated in the crucifixion, then all we have learned about Him from Jesus says "No." Yet it will be right to say that, God being what He is and men being what they were, the cross was necessary, and that, Jesus being what He was, it was inevitable. There was no change of purpose, nor even a change of method. Jesus went straight on, doing what He saw the Father doing, and that this should include the oblation of the cross affords us a revelation of the Father that nothing else has been able to suggest with such intensity. This, too, is how He saw God; this the meaning of God and man at-one, that God lives by self-giving, and so does man; this also the working out of that consciousness in which He saw Himself bound up with men, not able to separate Himself, even from the worst.

"Wouldst thou love one who never died
For thee, or ever die for one who had not died for thee?
And if God dieth not for man, and giveth not Himself
Eternally for Man, Man could not exist: for Man is Love,
As God is Love: every kindness to another is a little Death
In the Divine Image; nor can Man exist but by Brother-
hood.*

* Blake: *Jerusalem*.

The crucifixion of Jesus was His final wrestle with the false, self-made order in which men were bound, and the false God which they had established in place of the Father. It was also His final refusal to use any other method than had hitherto served Him.

On one side it was the climax of repudiation by the Jews of Jesus and His vision. They would have neither it nor Him. The first fact in the case is that it was a black murder, engineered by the religious authorities and carried out by the judicial court of Rome, which was only less culpable because the appeal of Jesus had not been made directly to it. Of both Rome and Jewry it is true that expediency outran justice. From this side there is no glory in the cross. It was an outrage, one of the many by which inconvenient people have been removed. John the Baptist had gone that same way, and Jesus had perhaps disappointed some people by making no effective protest. But here we have not the whim of an autocrat, but the co-operation, in their representatives, of two nations which prided themselves above all others on the purity of their religion or the justice of their laws. It was the delusive order at its best, conspiring to do its worst, and revealing its true nature.

On the other side it was, on the part of Jesus, the repudiation of that same false order, of which self is the prince and chief, and the supreme vindication of the order for which He stood, the reality of which He knew in His own consciousness and must now make manifest. He, was doing nothing outside the Father when neither rushing on death nor evading it, He went

forward with no defence save a righteousness which was perfect as regards both God and man, and a love which would not be turned aside. Certain it is that if Jesus had failed at this point, the offer He made to men would have stirred no interest to-day, for all that we have so far learned of Him would have been denied if, in the crucial trial, He had chosen to "take the world as He found it."

Jesus, however, did not go to His death merely to vindicate an individual claim, or to prove His loyalty to a private vision, but because in so doing He would declare the reality of the Kingship of God, and show for ever the invincible purpose and patience of the Father. What men had not seen in His life and words He would make plain in His death. As someone has said, He had sowed the good seed in every field, and now, coming to the last hill, He sowed Himself.

In what way did Jesus repudiate and deny the evil, self-worshipping world-order by dying at its hands? He did so by revealing its true nature, by accepting the worst it could do, and by transcending it. We have but to watch the story from the beginning to see how a world, of which self is the principle, turns upon itself. Sin creates hardness and hardness creates more sin, so continually punishing itself, giving no hope of escape, but rather fastening the web of delusion more closely until any evil becomes possible, and the proud Jews are shrieking, "If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend. . . We have no king but Cæsar!"

There is no escape from that order by any means within itself, just as there can be no "war to end war." The only way out is the absolute denial of the principles of self-worship, upon which the world is still chiefly organised, and out of which nearly all its miseries come. It cannot be made to work differently, and its power for evil is but intensified when it is organised into governments, empires, systems—whether religious, commercial, or what not—which have only one sure dogma, that their existence and well-being must be preserved at all costs. The millions of dead now lying in Europe, the miseries of the living, and the bitter spirit of strife which infests the whole world are a tribute to its true nature. Jesus showed the truth about it when He took upon Himself the worst it could do to Him.

When passionate saints cry out, "My hands pointed the nails; my sins crucified my Lord," we are ready to accuse them of sentimentalism. But have we repudiated the order which put Jesus to death, which is, in its nature, still the present order of society? Are we so sure that if we had been in the crowd about Pilate's palace we should not have been shouting "Crucify him!" Believe me, dear reader, the people who did so were very like you and me. We may learn something from the saints.

Jesus also denied the old order by revealing the new. If the prince of this world has been judged—which is true, for men can never undo what the cross shows—then it was by the one Person who had the right, the Son of Man who opened reality to us. In His words, "Father,

forgive them ; they know not what they do," He recognised the evil, recognised it as self-delusion, but in forgiving He broke its spell for all who have eyes to see. How much greater than if He had merely led a crusade for the repression of this or that evil, and forged but another link in the chain by which men bind themselves to their past and make acknowledgment that the spirit of evil is still the real ruler of men. Jesus did not deny the past. All that was good in it—"the law and the prophets"—He accepted and fulfilled, letting nothing go. All that was bad in it He accepted also, but because He acted in the freedom of creative love, He carried the bad no further, but broke the chain, and led the way out.

Ages before the Buddha had said, "Hatred ceases not by hatred, but only by love," Jesus said the same when, at a stroke, He showed that the prince of this world and all his ways are but delusion, but He did more than commend to us a heroic example. He showed the way of God, the true triumph of righteousness, in which the holiness that must meet sin and the love that forgives are the same, and the whole circle of resentments and punishments and repressions falls to pieces. He showed us reality in a paradox, for if He could still see God as a forgiving God, seeking even under such circumstances the willing fellowship of men, then, in a way we could never have imagined, the last word about God is that He is holy love. If He has suffered with us in all the bondage which self has created, it was but that He might win us from it, and the fact that He so suffers and

allows such suffering makes it plain that it is not a cheap substitution which He offers us, but a forgiveness which means moral revolution, a joyful acceptance of God's will by men even though it means the cross. This very cross of Christ, with all that it implied of selfishness, betrayal, contempt, violence, agony, desertion and death, is the centre of all things. It is our supreme symbol of Fatherhood and Brotherhood. It is there that God and man, at one in Him who was slain, may be for ever reconciled, and out of that reconciliation that a new world is to be born.

II

Jesus denied the old order also by transcending it.

Christians look upon the cross and see in it a victory, because they instinctively measure it by the light that has shone from it, or add to it things which followed from it, whether little or much; but the disciples went back to their lodging in Jerusalem feeling that all their hopes had been buried with the body of their Master. It was the very end. The women came to the grave in the dawn after the sabbath expecting to find everything in the regular course of nature, and, as Dean Church says, "In the regular course of nature there is not much to comfort those who go to visit the graves of their friends." Had the story finished there, with the final burial of Jesus, the disciples would have been right. Would they not, on reflection, have said, "If God is all

the Master said He was, and if the Master Himself was all that He led us to believe, this could not have happened. He was greatly concerned about God. Was God at all concerned about Him? " However they had been moved by His high example of devotion, they would have had to discount a great part of His message, as many people do to-day. "It is easy and reasonable to believe that an over-wrought preacher at last went mad," Mr. Bernard Shaw tells us, but the rest of the story, though it ends "in the history of a psychopathic delusion, is quite credible, intelligible, and interesting to modern thinkers."* But should we have had the rest of the story, in which there is "nothing . . . that cannot be assented to by a Brahman, a Mahometan, a Buddhist or a Jew, without any question of their conversion to Christianity?" Would the disciples have ever passed it on, now that His personal claim to represent the new order had come to such an end? A life of Jesus might conceivably have existed, to move men to the sorrowful thought that the world order had been able to produce one who saw so far beyond it that it could only turn and destroy Him, but the promise of a divine order would be the grand illusion, the carrot dangled before the donkey to keep him moving. Bend to your tasks, my brothers! The only difference between Jesus and ourselves is that He was more completely diddled by the carrot.

But the women who went to the tomb, and the disciples who followed, did not find all things in the regular course of nature, and, however

* Preface to *Androcles*.

we may account for it, it was their belief in the difference, and not their regard for a doctrine, which changed the face of the world.

The resurrection is necessary to the story. We look back upon it, as the disciples did when they were convinced that the incredible had happened, and see that Jesus had always said so. How they had interpreted those words which they tell us "they understood not" we do not know, but probably it was of some far-off resurrection after Jewish ideas. All the words of Jesus about death look forward, in faith, to victory over death. If He saw reality as we have gathered from considering His message and watching His life, is there any reason to suppose that He was deluded here, save for some pre-conception of the nature of that reality for which we have no authority that can compare with His? Could there be any "God and man at-one," for this brief earth life only? We have seen that Jesus envisaged it as a good so great that its full realisation depends upon all men, even though the individual might now enter in and possess it in a growing measure. If He, who revealed its reality in Himself, could be wiped out of it at a stroke, then God and man at-one, as He saw it, could mean little or nothing for anyone else.

It is not merely a question of survival. Probably half the population of Jerusalem would have admitted, had they been questioned, that Jesus survived in some general, unreal sort of way, as millions of people believe in survival now. But that is not a belief in the Kingship of God. Death, as then understood, was part of the

order to be overcome. Those who died were "out of it," out of reality. Jesus must show, not only that the authority of the prince of this world is a delusion, but that the power of death is a delusion too, for that is his great weapon. He must show that in the sphere of reality dissolution of the visible body in itself makes no difference, that God and man are still essentially what they were before, which is not at all what they dream to whom the present order is the last word.

It has been suggested by one school of thought,* which greatly exalts the nature of Jesus Christ, that His death was due to some breakdown at the last, and that, had He maintained to the end the consciousness by which He lived, He would have conquered without dying, and revealed all His power by flinging death aside in the full sight of men. The truth is better than that. Such an end might have served for Himself, but He was Son of Man. That He should go to such a death was not in itself either His choice or the Father's whose will He did. It was the choice of men. But that He should conquer death was part of the great thing He had to show. He must descend to the depths if He is to lift us from them. It was from the depths marked by the cry of desolation and desertion that He rose again.

"God and man at-one" means that death and Hades are overcome. The accounts given to us of the "appearances" of Jesus to His disciples suggest a complete mastery of physical conditions, not achieved by any kind of magic

* Kingsford and Maitland.

but the natural expression of a personality in which moral and spiritual oneness with God was complete, and therefore creative.† He was able to manifest Himself to His disciples, and they were able to see Him. Those who had never truly seen Him as He moved amongst them in the flesh could not see Him now—a hint, perhaps of what “outer darkness” may mean.

One might suppose that Jesus missed a great chance, that if He had shown Himself as risen from the dead—to the Jewish Sanhedrin, let us say, His claims could no longer have been denied, and mankind would have had official and satisfactory evidence. But Jesus had dealt with that idea before. “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one should rise from the dead.” Jesus could not manifest Himself to them; they could not see Him. We may take it which way we will, so long as we realise that the hindrance was not merely psychic, but moral and spiritual. The disciples, despite all their misunderstandings and fears, had loved their Lord, had seen Him for what He was. Now they saw Him again, and were able to understand that He was, if we may put it so, more alive than ever, not removed from them into some other part of space, even though presently He was to withdraw into some state of being that seemed more remote from them. In the Father’s house there are many abiding places, but it is all the Father’s house, and to that place of reality they knew that they too now belonged, and that He was intimately

† It is doubtless some such mastery which is implied in Paul’s “redemption of the body.”

bound up with them for evermore. They knew now that all He had said was so ; it was no private dream of One whom they had sometimes scolded and sometimes feared, but always had loved. He was Master of reality, the personal expression and image of reality, upon whom God had visibly set His seal.

VII

THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW ORDER

WITH the death of Jesus and His victory over death the events of the day of Pentecost have intimate connection. The apostolic community thought of them together, naming the grace of Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It is with such a connection in mind that Paul tells us that the Kingship of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. We have to consider the meaning of this great experience of the disciples in its relation to the Kingship of God as Jesus declared it.

It will not be fanciful to picture them as meeting together, after their farewell meeting with Jesus, in a common mood of joy, regret and expectation. Already a new order of things had been opened to them, in a way not possible while they walked the roads of Palestine in company with their Friend. Many delusions must have dropped from them during the days through which they had just passed. There was an openness to reality through the forgetting of self, a single-mindedness, a sense of oneness with each other, which were the necessary conditions of God's further dealing with them. They saw now what the great end of life is, and it was in this

state of readiness that the barriers set about self, which, during these last days, had been crumbling, now broke down, and there came pouring into consciousness that by which they found themselves enriched beyond anything that they had known. "Tongues like as of fire," and "a sound as of a rushing mighty wind," are merely the best account they can provide of what they realised, not the testimony of eyes and ears to external physical phenomena.

The obvious explanation to them—and it is difficult to find any that is better—was that there had come to them that of which Jesus had spoken and for which He had bidden them wait, the realisation in themselves of the "power from on high" which had been so manifest in His own personality. God had responded to their readiness and had given them an earnest of that universal consciousness which the Kingship of God must finally mean.

They believed also that this new-born spiritual consciousness had come to them through Jesus Christ, for the best of reasons. It bore its own witness to them that here was the perpetual presence which He had promised, and its experience was to them the final proof that their Master had transcended all limitations and had entered into the innermost of God. They recognised in the Spirit's presence the inward personal reality of what they had seen in Him; that which, more than His outward form, had made Him what He had been to them, the manifestation of God and man at one. It was what they had known of Jesus that alone could give content and meaning to this new experience.

That this experience was regarded by the first Christians as something new does not mean that the Spirit of God had not been present in the world before, or that men had not realised it. The newness was the connection with Jesus and with the new conception of God which He had brought. The Spirit has always been present, as the energy and life of all creation, the hidden reservoir of all spiritual power. The story of religion everywhere is the story of the constant pressure of the Spirit of God upon men, and where they have been able to respond, and in proportion to the extent and quality of their response, their life has been enlarged. Men have found beyond their own consciousness, and continuous with it, a greater consciousness with which they could, on occasion, make contact ; which, at other times, seemed to rush up unbidden and flood their whole being with new power. Their almost universal testimony is that they were then possessed by a power outside themselves, and were yet more themselves than ever.

The results of that inflow depend upon the spiritual and moral condition of the person who experiences it. In the Old Testament, to go no further afield, we get such results as the prophetic frenzy which came upon Saul and the abnormal strength of Samson, as well as the loftiest visions of the prophets. If that seems surprising, it is only what Jesus implied in the story of the prodigal, where the Father, who represents God, gives into the hand of his son treasure which he turns to bad account. There are to-day instances of those who, to serve some private end, have sought abnormal powers without regard to moral

and spiritual fitness, and have worked on themselves unspeakable havoc. It is written : To the pure He showeth Himself pure, and to the froward He showeth Himself froward. The delusive order is not confined to the things we can see.

If, on the other hand, there are those whose experience—which there is no reason to doubt or to be surprised at—finds expression in such terms of universal fellowship as we find in Walt Whitman, we may take what they give us with deep gratitude as a word of God, remembering, as has been said, that the *form* of such an experience depends upon the level of the person concerned and the content of his consciousness, which is not obliterated, but intensified by this new birth. Whitman, for instance, was not what would be called an “orthodox” Christian, but his heterodoxy was chiefly a very natural impatience with the forms of Christianity which he saw, and his consciousness was soaked through and through with the Christian tradition.* The result is that *Leaves of Grass* is marked by true inspiration, and expresses an aspect of the Kingship of God which cannot well be over-emphasised, since it was so manifest in our Lord Himself. It may well replace some of the terribly “private” and sentimental books of devotion with which many Christians delude themselves.

There is, however, a vein of modern mysticism which is at least equally private and sentimental, though that is far from the way in which its devotees would describe it. The claim made for it is that it is superior to Christianity because it is more catholic, and is free to interpret its

* See *The Life of Whitman* : Henry Bryan Binns.

subjective experiences by any symbolism it chooses, or none at all. We are to "go into the silence," and there to discover, in the depths of our own being, the hidden secret of all religions. Now to "go into the silence," is a practice worthy of all commendation, but what we discover there is, in itself, not the ultimate secret, but the ultimate mystery of which the secret is yet to be found. What is it we do actually find there? In itself, a profound feeling, an expansion of consciousness, which carries with it a conviction of its own reality. It is as though some rock bound pool became, at rising tide, aware of the great depths to which its existence is due. But that is not enough for life as we have to meet it every day. We are driven to ask the questions which Paul asked when he found himself confronted with reality on the road to Damascus.

Who art Thou, Lord? (or, at least, What is it?). Until we have had some answer to that, we can give no content to our feeling at all. That here is something vast and full of meaning for us may, indeed, fill us with awe and uplift us with joy, but had not primitive man reached that stage long centuries ago?

What wilt Thou have me to do? Modern psychologists are united in warning us of the danger of allowing deep emotion to turn in upon itself. "All consciousness is motor."* It must be expressed in action, if we are not to lose ourselves in a swamp of subjective delusion.

All the religions of the world are attempts to answer those questions, keys forged to fit that lock. We have already seen that any really

* William James.

satisfactory answer must be in personal terms. That there have been many partial answers is only what we might expect; indeed, we would have reason for complaint if it were not so, but the full answer can only be given by a perfect person. If the manifestation in time, under conditions of human life, of such a personality as we have been studying is only one more partial answer, with no more authority than any other, then we have to conclude either that the lock is one that any key will open—and so not much of a lock—or that none of them will open it at all. We have had the experience, but for the rest, we have only made a few passes with our minds, and are not any farther on than we were before. We may talk about the great Self, or the Allness of the All, of Krishna, or even Christ, but if we have no content other than the feeling itself to put into the words, we have no real answer to our questions.*

The disciples had a real answer to both questions. They had seen God in Jesus. What God would

* Edward Carpenter, for example, in his *Art of Creation*, says "There are thousands and thousands round us to whom the figure of Christ, say, is an intense, a living, and an actually present reality. It is difficult to suppose that all these people are merely deceiving themselves." That is true and well said, but he goes on: "It is a thing of the same character as the deities of olden time." The whole point, however, is that it is *not* of the same character, that while Christ does represent and gather up all that men found in the deities of olden time, He is not an idea, or the summary of profound feelings, or an "apparition of the Race Life," but a Person actually manifested in time, in the conditions of human life. No one supposes that Pan, or the Krishna of the *Bhagavad Gita* is such a person. He whom men had desired and sought and found—in measure—under all these forms was now fully manifested in a human life, revealing the true nature and purpose of God *in personal and moral terms*. It is in this that His uniqueness consists.

say and do through men had been manifested, as it only could be manifested, in a personality, a word of life which their hands had handled,* in whom God and man were consciously, morally, at one. They had seen the Son of Man, who is God in all men, now revealed in fulness in a human life, and shown to be the Son of God by His death and resurrection. Was He less God and man at-one because He had gone from their sight into the innermost? No. God and man are now one in the very heart of reality. God is all Jesus was, save in the limitations of the flesh. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ, the *Holy Spirit*, the Spirit of Sonship now manifest in their own consciousness as the new thing won for them, the earnest and promise of the perfect fellowship of God and all men, of the final revelation which He had promised. And because the Spirit was the Spirit of Christ, they no longer experienced *it* as an impersonal power, but met *Him* in personal fellowship. (From this standpoint Christ is the personality of God, which has been revealed in the only way in which it could be recognised.)

From this time forth to the Christian, *the Kingship of God and the Lordship of Christ mean the same thing.*

The first sermon of Peter, following immediately on the great experience of Pentecost, is to the effect that the offer of God still stands, stands in Christ, and the first step towards receiving it is the acknowledgment that Jesus is Christ and Lord.

To acknowledge Him as Lord is to see and confess that He, as He was seen of men in life,

* 1 John i. 1.

death and resurrection, is the very heart, the very reality of God. To acknowledge Him as Christ is to recognise that He is the interpretation of all that the Spirit of God, continually pressing upon us, would say to us, the explanation of all the dreams of men for a better world, of "The Undying Fire" in the heart, and the secret of all our discontent with this "perverse generation," which is Peter's name for the evil order in which we are fast. The way was still the way that Jesus had declared, the honest attempt of every man "to discover in what form, through what weakness, he does most constantly refuse the Kingdom of Heaven,"* the repudiation, in repentance, of the self-order and our share in it, the act of moral choice by which we make God's will ours, and the response of God in forgiveness and the liberation of our personality, the new birth of a consciousness at once human and divine, such as Peter and his fellows have experienced, and active fellowship in the community which is now the witness to God's purpose and offer through Christ.†

Because that offer still stands in those same terms, then the Lordship of Christ must mean the Kingship of God, and we deny Christ when, in word or practice, we confess Him with any less end in view. There can be no private "full salvation." It is a contradiction in terms.

A tree is known by its fruits, and the immediate results in the life of the new-born community bear all the marks of the source from which its inspiration had come, confirming what we have

* Clutton Brock: *What is the Kingdom of Heaven?*

† Acts ii.

already seen as to the nature of the Kingship of God, both as a present possession and yet a thing to come. The gift of the Spirit has been described as an earnest or instalment of the universal consciousness in which all false separations will disappear, and God and all men will be at one. It is but an earnest, a first fruits. The fulness is only permanently possible when the church has won the world to belief, and all can come in. But since this consciousness was a realisation of the personal presence of Christ, a "coming," it is also an earnest of the final victory.

The communism of those first days was the expression of that consciousness in the life of a group of people, its witness that the Kingship of God is a fellowship in which each lives for all and all for each. Of all the Spirit's gifts, fellowship is the chief. The sufferings of the group under persecution, and its temper under those sufferings, are the mind of Christ who, in the Father's name, transcended evil by meeting it and forgiving it. They belong to the birth pangs of the new age. The works of healing wrought in the name of Jesus and the various "gifts" of the early church are the sign that the Spirit in them is the Spirit of Christ. Their ardent propaganda is the reflection in them of the power in which Jesus came up into Galilee, preaching the Good News of God.

They did not wait for the *coming* of Christ, but for His appearing. So far as they themselves were concerned, He had come. They waited only for His full manifestation when His purpose should have been fulfilled through His community.

The individual ministry of Jesus on earth is ended. In that sense His work is finished. It is to be carried on through the society which from the commencement is pledged to Him (baptised into His name), which is to be the body of His action, doing His works and bearing His authority, not by magical or mechanical transmission, but by oneness with Him in the Holy Spirit.

The one great business of that community is the proclamation to the world, by words and works and a new way of life, of the Kingship of God offered in Christ.

VIII

INTERPRETATIONS

THE discovery of the first Christians, that the Kingship of God and the Lordship of Christ mean the same thing, is the assumption of the rest of the New Testament. In the Book of Revelation that is so obviously the case that no more need be said about it, but it is equally true of the epistles. If we take the letters of Paul as representative of the rest, we find in that assumption the vital connection between his teaching and the gospel story. Paul is not saying a different thing, as we are sometimes told; he is saying—and interpreting—the same thing under other conditions. His great concern, as all will admit, is still *God and man at one in all the purposes and activities of life.*

Nor is he offering a different method by which this at-oneness is to be brought about. That can only be believed by those who ignore the fact that, to Jesus, the acceptance of His offer was bound up with the reception of Himself, and the realisation of the Kingship of God with the victory of the Son of Man. It is to that victory Paul looks, right to the end of his career.

His emphasis differs from that we find in the words of Jesus, but that is chiefly because he could not pass over vital facts. Is he to regard

the death of Jesus as merely the unhappy ending to a great career dedicated to a purpose which he, Paul, would now take up and carry on? Paul did not see it so; he saw in the death of Jesus Christ the summary and supreme illustration of all that His words had meant. God was like that, not making a bargain of so much reward for so much good behaviour, but a holy, loving Person, seeking personal relationships with men that He might give them all He had, and going to every length of love to make Himself understood. To recognise and accept that was to come at once into a new standing with God, a right personal relation, the righteousness of faith. It was the vision of such a God, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," that set Paul free from the self-centred order in which he had so long vainly struggled—the best that he could make out of the law. (We may say that what to Paul was "the law," is with us conscience, in a struggle to make the delusive order work righteously.) The emphasis of Paul over the gospels on the matter of sin, is due to the nature of his own personal deliverance from this cruel struggle, and experience since proves that Paul's way through has been the way for very many people. This is not to say that it is the only way there is, or that its value will be the same for all times and temperaments alike.

It was not a dead but a living Christ who spoke to Paul out of the blinding light on the Damascus road, and enabled him forthwith to enter into the fellowship of the men he had marked down as enemies of God. It is from that experience he starts, with such conviction of its reality, and

such confirmation in practice, that we may say he lived only to proclaim to men the offer of God in Christ as still available, for the same ends, by the same methods, as were declared by Jesus Himself. All that he has to say turns upon that, and is nothing more than enlargement, restatement or interpretation of that essential thing.

I am persuaded that it is worth our while to get this fact firmly into our minds, for the idea of some sort of a gulf between the "ethical teaching" of Jesus and the "evangelical doctrine" of Paul has worked nothing but mischief, leading on the one hand to the presentation of a merely ideal Christ, who is powerless to redeem the lives of men, and leaves the world's future to a gradual amelioration of human manners, and, on the other to an individualistic piety which finds in the acceptance of a plan of salvation, followed by a life of decent private behaviour and a little church going, all that Jesus lived and died for, so far as this world is concerned. The immense promise and demand, and the revolutionary implications of the Christian religion remain unnoticed, and all the attention is concentrated on that part of Paul's doctrinal system which interprets his escape from bondage.

It does not belittle the significance of that deliverance to say that it is only the gateway into the experience itself, which is the realisation of sonship ("heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ"), the new consciousness brought to birth by the union of the Divine with the human spirit, the life "in the Spirit," which is Paul's term for the Kingship within, the sense of universal brotherhood, the life of love: all of which are

varied expressions of the immediate good which Jesus revealed in Himself and offered to men. And further, to Paul even this great experience is but the first fruits of the spirit, the earnest of the universal consciousness which the perfect Kingship of God means. It may be said that Paul does not envisage a new order of human society as we understand the words, but is that perhaps because we understand by a new order, merely the re-arrangement of the old pieces? Paul looks onward to the "redemption of the body," the deliverance of nature itself from vanity, the unity of all men in Christ, when the body of the Son of Man shall be all the human race, and the consciousness of mankind so exalted that all our present limitations will be transcended. We shall "know as we are known." And the way is the way of Love.

There is nothing here alien to the good news which Jesus declared. It is Paul's interpretation of that same offer. It is an interpretation. Paul was Paul, and never claimed to be more, or to have any source of inspiration other than is open to any Christian. His temperament, his training, and sometimes his prejudices give his words a turn which we may properly reckon with. He was writing letters to churches in existence, dealing with actual people whose difficulties and habits of thought are not just ours, but when we pierce through these things to the meaning, we see, beyond Paul, Christ; not a subjective Christ of his own, but the Jesus Christ who speaks to us in the gospels. That he seems to have had little interest in the details of the life of Jesus, save the death and resurrection, and

rarely quotes or refers to His words, only makes the likeness more striking. The fundamental things are all there.

In addition to Paul's interpretation of the gospel of Christ, we have his effort to explain Jesus Himself. He had found that Jesus of Nazareth and the reality of God in himself spoke with the same voice. The new personality born within him by the Spirit of God was Christ, and yet, as he knew, himself also, the Son revealed in him. So far as that experience itself goes, it was one with that of the disciples at Pentecost. But they had known Jesus; their consciousness was already charged with the thought of Him. Had we no other testimony, we might say that their discovery that Christ now lived in them was due to the fact that they interpreted their experience by the first explanation that came to hand. It may be doubtful whether or no Paul had ever actually seen Jesus, but Jesus was not just the obvious explanation of his experience. He was familiar enough with the Old Testament and might have explained things along the lines of Spirit possession. That Jesus was at the heart of it all was forced upon him.

All the more was he driven to find some way of accounting for Jesus Christ which would satisfy his mind and serve others, and what he did find follows naturally from the conclusions we reached in our consideration of the Son of Man. What is the meaning of that unique consciousness which is of such a range that it enables Jesus to speak at the same time for Himself and for every man and for God, and to convince us that He

speaks with authority? Paul's answer is that He was the "New Man," who is not "a living soul" but a "quickening spirit," the revelation in a human life of that Divine Sonship which is and always has been God's purpose for the human race, and which only all the race together can realise. He was "the Fulness of Him who fills us all," the Universal manifested for a time fully in the individual, "the Son" coming not to claim but to win His Kingship out of the dark distresses and tragedies of human life as men have made it, to win it by the way of endurance, and the cross. Because He so won it, Jesus Christ is Lord.

It is only by so regarding Christ that Paul can account for his own experience, and that of his fellow Christians; the Son revealed in himself, Christ "formed" in the believer, the recapitulation in the individual of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ, and the looking for His final manifestation which, on the larger scale, is to be the way of the Kingship of God in the world.

It is out of explanations forced upon Paul by his experience that he constructed his theology, and came to believe that Christ has no less than a cosmic significance; it is because "in Him all things hold together," that He can be all this to all men, and yet be Himself. He is a Universal Person. But to say this is to set Him beside God, and to make it clear that "Jesus Christ is Lord" is not merely a phrase that may be used for "the Kingship of God," because Jesus lived only for that end, but it actually does mean the same thing.

To suppose that this is so much theology, of no practical moment, is a mistake. The practical meaning is this, that God is like Jesus. He has entered fully into human life. There is nothing at all in the nature of God which is unlike Him. To worship any God unlike Jesus is idolatry and delusion; it is to fasten ourselves in the evil order from which, above all things, we need deliverance. William Blake has said with truth : " Man must and will have some religion ; if he has not the religion of Jesus, he will have the religion of Satan, and will erect the synagogue of Satan, calling the Prince of this World ' God.' " To suppose that by any method alien to those of Jesus we can attain to permanent good, either for ourselves or the world, is also delusion. The one ultimate good, on any showing save that God is evil, is His victory in the world. If God is unlike Christ He can only be inferior. If His omnipotence is only that of superior might, He is morally inferior. If His knowledge of our virtues and sins, our struggles and hopes, is only that of a far-off omniscience, He cannot speak to us like Him, who as flesh of our flesh, went down to the depths and faced it all.

More than that, if the God whose victory we confess would be the ultimate good is not like Christ, what is He like ? How can we have any idea what His victory would mean ? If God is only in process of becoming Himself, He has not yet, during the years since, surpassed Jesus Christ. One might almost say that He had lost ground. But if the Good News is true : " God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them," then we have

a hope. We have seen the Kingship of God in Jesus Christ, and we know that the Christ in ourselves is He who will yet make it all good.

It is through those in whom Christ repeats Himself that He carries on His work, those who have been crucified to the world and the world to them. They are to be the individual particulars of the ultimate Universal Christ, the life of Christ being even now manifested in their mortal bodies. Already their individual limitations are being transcended in the fellowship of the Christian community, where, in the service of their fellows, they serve Christ, and find their own salvation.

But the community is not the end. Only Christ, in His victory, embracing all men in His oneness, is the end, and, as Paul hints, there is an end beyond that. The life of the community in the Spirit, their fellowship, their witness by word and deed, are to show Christ forth. Unceasingly the circle must be extended. Everywhere new circles must be formed. And all the while they must look to the end, the reality which is yet to be fully manifested. In the earlier letters Paul uses the phrases of Jewish apocalyptic; later he speaks more of the unity of the body of Christ, the One Man embracing all the human race in Himself, the Universal Person in whom all persons find themselves. It is the same thing in other words: the final victory of the Son, who will then hand over the Kingship to the Father that God may be all in all.

It may be that Paul discovered that the victory was not to be so soon as he had hoped, or perhaps not so soon as some had taken his words to mean, but the slowness is not of God's appointment,

but due to the unbelief and hardness of men. The "man of sin," the prince of delusion, will not let his claim expire without a struggle, but God always waits; Christ is always there; the Kingship is always imminent. Watch and be faithful, as children of the light and of the day. Meanwhile, those who have passed on from this earthly scene also wait, still in the fellowship, for the same great end, when, "in the twinkling of an eye, we shall all be changed," and "know as we are known."

IX

THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

IN his suggestive book, *What is the Kingdom of Heaven?* Mr. Clutton Brock rather complains that we find nothing about his subject in the creeds of the church. That some reference to it might have been made with advantage is no doubt possible, but we have seen the reason for the omission, a reason to which Mr. Brock hardly seems to give due weight. Christ is in the creeds; they are chiefly concerned with Him, and He stood for all those moral, spiritual, personal values that the first Christians saw the Kingdom of Heaven to mean. In confessing the Lordship of Christ, they confessed their sense of the reality of the Kingship of God as a present experience; in looking for the day when every knee should bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord, they recognised the Kingship to come. Perhaps what we need is a better conception and a fuller of the Lordship of Christ, a more vivid realisation of all that He is and would be to us.

That Christ was to the early church what only God could be, they came to believe, and it is this fact of experience that the creeds attempt to explain. Creeds are symbols, necessarily imperfect, and the creeds which have come down

to us are in terms which reflect the ways of thought of the time when they were framed, and are not just those we would use to-day. All the same, we must remember that the people who made them were men of amazingly acute mind, who had tried over most of the possible alternatives to their final explanation, and rejected them because they found that they led to insuperable difficulties or contradictions. Their conclusion, modified a little by the use of more modern terms, was this :

He who was manifested in time as Jesus of Nazareth, was truly human in every way. "There was nothing in Him that was not human." But also, "there was nothing in Him that was only human."* He was God, not the Father, whom no man has seen at any time, but the "other self" of God, the Son, eternally and continually begotten, in whom the universe is brought into being, its very soul, the Personality expressed in all personalities, the Life which is the light of men. For, though God is one, He is not a bare unit, but rather a Fellowship of Light and Life and Love, out of whom all truth and beauty and goodness spring. Of that Creative Love the universe is the expression in time and space, its end being the bringing of many children into that same Fellowship; its method the long, slow, painful method of freedom. Our sonship is possible because we have our being in the Son. He has hidden Himself in us that He may be born anew in the consciousness of every man who makes free response to the Spirit of God, and so may bring the whole race into a place in God's own life.

* Maltby: *Studies in St. Mark* (I.).

That is the Kingship of God, Father and Son, in the unity and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, in every man. That is what personality is to mean, and how it is to be achieved, not in solitude, but in the fellowship of a family of which God is Father. That all men might know and understand this, the Son took His place amongst us, accepted every human limitation, was born out of humanity as Son of Man, proved before us His true origin, not by the exhibition of superhuman powers, but by the truth and love which were manifested in Him. He proved His origin—and ours—under misunderstandings, desertion, ignominy and death, all the things which seem to deny it, and won back the place which is His own. And He won it for us, as “the First-born of many brethren.”

Such a thing could only happen in a family of persons, and it could only happen in time because it is a symbol of what God is always doing. The Son is eternally born of the Father, perpetually enters the limitations of human life to seek His Kingship in men, endures crucifixion—for Christ or self is crucified in every man, only to rise again and ascend to the Father. To call the appearance of Jesus on the stage of history a symbol, is not to deny either its reality or significance in itself, but to assert it. The Eternal Christ and the Jesus of the gospels are not two, but one and the same. The man executed by Pilate as a criminal is Himself the Son Who travails in human life to win a Kingship for God which is also our Kingship. He is the one guarantee we have that such a victory is possible, for while of man we must still say, “We see not

yet all things put under him," we can go on to say, "We see Jesus," who has won through as a member of the family, and is "not ashamed to call us His brethren."*

For this we call Him Lord; the beginning of the Kingship of God is the acknowledging Him as such. There is no part of human life He does not touch, or cannot show us the meaning of. There is no human being to whom He is not related. The Kingship of God is still offered to us in Christ; not just in what He said, or did, or was: not even in what He is now, but in all these things together, one interpreting the other.

Then where are we to begin?

We may begin from what we find in ourselves, as we see Him to be the interpretation: we may begin by seeing Him and discovering how He awakens and satisfies what is in ourselves. In one sense we may begin anywhere, for any road leads to God if you go far enough. Probably the last way to begin for most people is with the creeds or theological statements about Jesus, though we cannot but come to them some time. Was He not right when He began as Son of Man, and spoke of reality in a way which still appeals to the best in men? Even after His death, the Christian community did not begin with the creeds; it began by seeing in Christ that which spoke to its condition.

Most people find something to admire in Jesus Christ; indeed, that is scarcely enough to say at a time like this, when men everywhere are giving expression to the feeling that if He cannot show us the way out of our difficulties they do not

* Hebrews ii. 6-12.

know where to look. There is no one else to whom men so continually turn, whose words can be interpreted and re-interpreted and yet always leave us with the sense of something yet to be shown, and whose personality so much invites and eludes us. But it is quite possible to admire Jesus and His programme quite intensely, and be ready—we imagine—to welcome every change He would suggest, until it dawns upon us that the principal change must be in ourselves! “Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?” It is when we take some step out of admiration into action that we begin to find ourselves out, and to realise how deeply self-delusion has laid hold of us. Not many men can go far on the way of action and obedience without being overcome by a sense of inadequacy and failure which, somehow, the cross alone enables us to meet and bear, and which a vague, cheerful optimism leaves untouched.

“Your sight of Heaven cancels not my Hell ;
Your sun has only power to dissipate
The night fog, that returns with his decline :
You reassure me not : all is not well :
I house with sins that only a divine
Vicarious passion can eradicate.”*

Many people must simply begin there, for the cross cannot be treated as though it had never been, and the one hope for some of us was the revelation of the truth about ourselves, and then about God, which is to be found in it ; for there is no Kingship of God possible in delusion, whether about ourselves or Him. It may be said with certainty that no man can continue to

* *To an Optimist* : Henry Bryan Binns.

deal honestly with himself in the light which shines from Jesus Christ without being driven to the conviction that here is something very different from any way of life that he has seen elsewhere, and that here is reality. We may quite disagree with the interpretation the church puts upon Him ; we may condemn the way the church has manifested Him in its life ; we may doubt this and that point in the story, and make liberal allowance for mistaken credulity ; we may even consider what is left as very impracticable—save that Jesus did it, but if we will not ride off through what has been wittily called “the emotional exit,” but steadily look at our own manner of life in the light of that life, we find ourselves judged.

Do we not discover that in our hearts we have always known what God sought of us, that if we have been deluded about life's values we were, to a great extent, self-deluded, and even rather wished to be deluded ? It is not ignorance that has held us back for the most part, but self-regarding fear. Our very laws and respectabilities have been a half ashamed compromise with the false order, which, for fear alone, we could not bring ourselves to deny. Our bitterness against evil-doers, our righteous indignation with those who will not observe the compromise, has been tainted with fear. Our very anger against them gains much of its force from the knowledge that we cannot truly disown them. We are all bound up with one another : we must seek the Kingship of God together.

But who is this who awakes such a consciousness in us ? Not just a person who lived once upon

a time. We know that He speaks now, not from without only, but from within. We acknowledge His right in our consciousness of these things, and we have to acknowledge it completely when we see that He not only speaks from some vision of reality which makes its own appeal, but that He did the thing of which He speaks. He has actually lived by love, and carried it through to the end, and it is by the way of love that all He promises is to be achieved.

It is by this path rather than by argument that we begin to find that Jesus Christ is Lord, For most men, as has been implied, it is a humbling experience, for who has not walked in delusion ; who has not consented in a world which consents, and is a prey to unbelief and fear ? Or, as H. G. Wells asks : What man of us can say, " All I do is service ? " Yet if we are judged with pain to ourselves, it is only because we have seen our false against the true ; it is therefore a hopeful pain, and if we can go on to recognise that we have seen the truth, not in a formula, or a process, or an abstract ideal, but in a person, we will make the discovery that a wrong personal relation is behind all our trouble, and that it can be put right. When we have reached that point, we no longer want to cut ourselves off from anybody, for we have no self-pride left. The nature of the delusive order and its futility are plain to us, and there is only one thing to say : " I will arise and go to my Father." We have actually reached, by pursuing our admiration for Christ, the same state as any poor profligate whom we may have despised, who was only conscious of a bondage and a broken relation which he would fain see put right.

This is the place where all men meet on their way to the experience of the Kingship of God, however varied their ways have previously been. It is here that the sophisticated become little children, and recognise a Father and a family, and also a welcome. For what is it that Christ reveals to us save that "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all?" Not only no darkness of evil or delusion or separateness, but no resentment, no vindictiveness, nothing, in a word, by which the evil order can be continued; but that He will be with us in bearing and overcoming whatever limitations evil has brought upon us. So long as we choose to walk in darkness, we cut ourselves off, but "if we walk in the light . . . we have fellowship with one another." Yet, as John goes on to emphasise, it is in Him who walked this earth and died upon a cross that we have the guarantee of this, and can be sure that we are not embracing a new form of delusion. "The blood of Jesus, His Son (the reality of God's self-giving in the humanity of Jesus), cleanses us from all sin." It is Christ again, breaking through the old self-order and saying, as on earth, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are being forgiven."

And also, "Sin no more." Nothing could be further from the New Testament idea than the notion that the forgiveness which Jesus declared is merely the remission of penalties and consequences by the substitution of another for ourselves, and an easily obtained security with very little relation to moral and spiritual values. There are theories of the atonement which lend themselves to such a reading, and that the results

in practice do not generally shock us is due to the fact that men are better than their theories. Even when the idea of bare substitution of innocent for guilty is avoided, there is often the suggestion of an impersonal process, such as the creating of an equilibrium between the justice and love of God, or a legal transaction, of which we take advantage much as we went to the Food Control Office for our coupons. It cannot be too firmly laid hold of that the whole attitude of Jesus was personal. His great gift to us is the revelation in Himself that the Kingship of God is a relation between persons, and personal to the last letter. The atonement is not of principles or abstractions, it is an at-oneness of God and man as persons, brought about when man sees the reality of God in Christ, recognises the final reality of himself there too, and takes in faith and obedience the step which cuts him loose from self-delusion and brings him into the experience of the Kingship of God—so far as an individual can receive it—which means right relations to God and to every man besides.

It is along that path of right personal relations that the Christian life proceeds to the very end. All fellowship enlarges the personality, puts away the barriers that hedge us round. It is not by love of nature that consciousness is to grow from individual to universal, for nature reflects back our own minds, until we are so delivered from self that we can see through rather than see. It is by love of Christ in men and women—which is not different from loving them for their own sake—that we reach that consciousness of unity with all creation which oneness with God implies

To find all this in Jesus Christ, who is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is to acknowledge Him as Lord, not as a theological proposition, but in the experience of life. It is to find that in which the Kingship of God consists, for in such an experience we are conscious that God has won a victory in us, which is both His and ours; and that now, in the depths of our purpose and desire, God and man are at one. We have discovered the principle which remains to be worked out in practice. It is self-realisation, but it is also a vocation, for it is conscious membership in a life that is more than individual. It is life in a transcendent fellowship of which Christ is the soul, and Jesus Christ the Living Head. Individual and social are united here,

“ for, contracting our infinite senses,
We behold multitude; or, expanding, we behold as
one,
As One Man all the universal Family, and that One Man
We call Jesus the Christ.”*

The coming of the Kingship of God is the bringing into ever fuller manifestation, in all the purposes and activities of life, of that Son who has been revealed in ourselves, whom we recognise in Jesus Christ, and whom we now know to be the fundamental reality of every man.

(What do they discover who admire and still admire and cannot but admire, yet will not obey, but wait for a time when all shall obey?)

* William Blake: *Jerusalem*.

II

The reason why Christian people have too often failed to make their religion synonymous with the pursuit of the Kingship of God is not because they have thought so much about the person of Christ that they have forgotten His message, as is sometimes suggested ; not because they have put too much emphasis on the Lordship of Christ, but because they have put too little, and have not observed it where it is. That little has been rather theological than personal. It is here that what is known as " evangelical Christianity " has been weak. It has tended to stop at the experience of reconciliation with the Father, and to develop that as if it were the end rather than the beginning. True, a great leader like Wesley went on to speak of further things, of " Perfect Love " and " Christian Perfection," but it was of too private a nature, and even so, his teaching has very largely dropped out. For too many, life as a Christian became, not a means by which the Kingship of God was to be manifested, but a journey from this world—" a desert drear,"—to the next, where we shall be really *safe*. Security, in fact, was the main plank in that platform. A special vocabulary has gathered round this intensely private and other-worldly type of religion, varying with different schools of thought, but all, to the uninitiated, as strange as Chinese, and it has found expression in art, and especially poetry, which is sometimes passionately sincere and good, but more often of a degree of badness which the strongest religious flavour fails to hide.

The great weakness, however, is that all this intense private religion was consonant with a life which, while not open to any special charge of wrong, and often marked by great devotion on this specially religious line, was not noticeably better or happier than that of other average decent persons, and, in the matter of social virtues, sometimes inferior.* It was possible for two men to meet together for Christian fellowship, one of whom, to measure bluntly by modern standards, was the sweater and the other the sweated. Neither of them thought that there was anything about that which ought not to be in a Christian community. Wages were subject to an economic law which had no connection with Christ.

The church suffers still from the mind which thinks of Christ as only a private Saviour of men, even if it means all men; as another individual only, even though He is called God; as one more rule-maker, even though He came to deliver us from the law. He has been subjected to the measures of human narrowness until at times the name Christ has been but the symbol for a process with which men have sought contact, for certain private and not too unselfish ends. His Lordship has carried no suggestion to men of the Light that lighteth every man, which from the beginning has striven against darkness and nothingness, and has been the rebel against evil and the hope of good in the heart of mankind. It has been a theological Lordship, having little to do with such things as business, sex relations, painting

* There have always, of course, been saints who transcended the limits of any special form of religion. I speak only of the average.

pictures, or the housing question and politics. Whole ranges of human life, in which men eagerly moved and found self-expression, have been regarded as alien to Christ, or at least neutral ground.

In these areas of activity there could be, properly speaking, no Christian standards at all. At the worst, Satan ruled; at the best, there was some average decent standard. Where these activities were merely for pleasure, they were sternly passed by. Where they were more ambiguous, like the various forms of art, there were still no rationally Christian standards. Christian art was merely art which dealt with some subject from the Bible. A Christian tune was one which was set first to Christian words, which again must be of the kind which it is proper to sing in church. To show an interest in any of these things for their own sake was worldliness. There is a hymn book printed to-day whose preface states that a hymn should not be real poetry, lest the spirit be obscured by the form.

But there are some great human activities which are too important altogether to be dismissed in that way. One of these is the getting of money. As the one of chief ends of life at the present time, this sacred business has long been able to make rules of its own. Business is business. There have been ways of spending money regarded as specially Christian, but, with small exceptions, little general Christian judgment as to the ways in which it might be got, or of the special value of those who have it over and above their value as persons. Another is politics, which also has its own rules, and its own standard of truth,

which would hardly pass muster in any other sphere. Christians have engaged freely in these, but it can scarcely be claimed that they have brought them into subjection to the Lordship of Christ in any marked way. Rather, in the absence of distinct Christian standards of their own, they have capitulated to the current moral level.

This weakness of evangelical religion, which we are paying so dearly for now, in spite of the very great things it has done, was certainly not due to over-emphasis of the Lordship of Christ, but rather to lack of it. Would our great grandfathers have condemned little children to the horrors of their industrial system if they had recognised the personal Lordship of Him Who said, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these least, ye have done it unto Me," or, to come nearer home, would Christian men to-day have consented to the blockade of a large section of Europe, involving the starvation of thousands of innocent bairns?

We have to begin to discover what the Lordship of Christ means in every human activity. Christian art, for example, is not just art that deals with a technically Christian subject. It may do that and yet be quite pagan. It is art in which the divine significance of things and the value of persons is honoured, where there is no resentment or sentimentalism, or contempt, but only love and truth and joy—or pity. "Hallowed be Thy name," is the artist's prayer.

What the Lordship of Christ means in business has been dealt with in some detail in a former book,* where the point is insisted on that it is in

* *The Way to Personality.*

the actual doing of the work itself that Christ is to be honoured, and in all the relationships involved ; not by the addition of some sweetening of Christianity before or after. The same is true of every human activity. Christ is the meaning and end of all of them at their best, unless they are such that human values and fellowship are denied in them. When that is so, He is their final condemnation, for everything in which He cannot be is delusion.

If the Lordship of Christ has been but inadequately recognised in so many spheres of human activity as regards the ends aimed at, He has not always been more considered in the methods which Christians have employed, even when the end itself was worthy of His name. Yet that Lordship must mean, not only Christ's ends and values, but His methods, from which they are inseparable. Not by some stray word here and there, exalted by fanatics into a rigid rule, but by His whole attitude, and by His deliberate choice, He dismissed ways of influencing men which the church has often used, and which we cling to, even now. Nothing is easier, for example, than for a handful of enthusiasts to get up an agitation within the church itself for the repression of some section of wrong doers, or the forcing upon unwilling people some action believed to be good, without any regard to the conditions out of which the evil or lack of good may have sprung. If the agitation succeeds, it is held to be one more step gained towards the Kingship of God. Yet that it is so is very doubtful. Unless the people concerned have changed their mind about these things, the end of Christ has not

been served, and His method has been denied, What right has the Christian, from anything He can learn of Christ, to force his standards of behaviour upon those who are not Christians?

To go yet farther, can any Christian suppose that the penal system of our country is in any way under the Lordship of Christ? Yet there must be thousands of Christians engaged in carrying it out, and thousands more to whom it is the only possible way of dealing with offenders. One can say without qualification that it is not Christ's way.

The same is true of war. So involved was the Christian church in the standards and values of the self-order as shown in the history of Europe before 1914, that on the outbreak of war the best the churches of the various nations could do was to lend themselves whole-heartedly to the successful waging of war. There was not even an attempt, in any general way, to seek counsel with the fellow Christians of enemy countries. We took our instructions from the state. Our leaders in all the countries concerned preached a holy war, a war in the name of Christ, "quite unconscious," as Benjamin Kidd tells us, "of the spirit of a contradiction which in actual fact exceeds anything that has been witnessed in the world under any other standards."* Having so commenced, what could we do but go on, turning away our eyes while every Christian ideal was dragged in the mud, and paganism reigned supreme? When the war could no longer be called Christian, the peace was to be Christian, but the peace making was as much out of our

* *The Science of Power.*

hands as the war making was. The inevitable moral degradation has followed, and the church has to look on and consider that when it allowed any other authority to supersede the Lordship of Christ, it sold the pass and reduced itself to helplessness. It may be admitted that to go to war was the best that the state, in the circumstances, could do, but the question for the Christian is not what the state can do, but what the acknowledgment of the Lordship of Christ means. It does mean unswerving righteousness, but righteousness is not an abstraction which can be fought for or vindicated by *any* method. It consists in right relations between persons, and can only be vindicated as we show it in ourselves and exhibit it in others. "Sword and trowel cannot be carried in work of that character. It needs both hands."*

Let it be repeated that to confess Jesus Christ as Lord is not just to accept a new set of rules in place of the old law, and to interpret them with the same literalness which made the law a bondage. It is to accept a new valuation of things, of ends and methods alike; above all, a new valuation of men and women. All are to be valued in the light of that reality which streams from Christ, as He was manifested in a personal life. He gives all things their value. Nothing that denies Him has any value at all. Nothing that denies the value of persons has any value at all, for He identified all men, without regard to their merits, with Himself. Anything that subjects persons to things, or abstractions of the mind, denies Him. The spirit that would say in effect, "I am a person,

**The Free Spirit.* Henry Bryan Binns.

an end in myself. All others are means to my end," denies Him, for it means, "I am *the* person," whereas Christ is *the* Person, in Whom we are all persons, and who will not spare one. To accept the Lordship of Christ is to enter into a new order of things where there is neither British nor German, male or female, capitalist or labourer, neither upper class, middle class nor lower class, but all are one in Christ, one class, one community, of *persons*. This is not to be blind to differences. It is to accept them, so far as they are genuine and not the product of selfish separation; it is even to rejoice in them, but never to allow the difference, which is accidental though it may be valuable, to hide the oneness.

This new valuation of persons, which Jesus called love, is bound up with the end Jesus proposed and the offer He made, which is the Kingship of God; it is equally bound up with the method He set Himself to use. Men must choose, because they were persons. It was at once their responsibility and their privilege. Every opportunity of seeing what the Kingship of God means, every inducement to choose it must be given, but there must be no bribery, no coercion, however subtle, and no compromise with its essential righteousness. But if they refuse? The answer of Jesus was the cross.

Is wrong then to go unpunished? It never does, for it punishes itself. The Jews punished themselves quite effectively. Self-delusion creates its own hell every time. Our eagerness to do the punishing of others is not of Christ, for it but continues the delusion, and binds us up in it with those whom we punish. We have but to look on

Europe to-day to see this being worked out. The Lordship of Christ means Christ's values, Christ's ends, Christ's methods, which are not those of punishment, but of redemption and reconciliation.

Present individual experience of the Kingship of God therefore is the continuous and progressive realisation of Christ as the reality and so the Lord of our own being, and the discovery of and fellowship with Him in others, especially in those in whom also He is the Lord whom they consciously obey. The Spirit Jesus promised was to take the things of Christ and make them plain to those who knew Him, and this, not only as an understanding of the events of His earthly life, but also of His revelation in our own personality, when He speaks there, and repeats the reality which He is. It is in this way that the consciousness widens and deepens until it breaks through the limits of individuality and touches the universal, and we come to realise that there is nothing in the universe to which we are not related,* nor any one from whom we desire to cut ourselves off. At its best this creates a sympathy which enables us to speak directly to the hearts of our fellows, since we are no longer repelled by the superficial, but reach out to the Christ in them. Every such contact is a promise of the day when He shall come to His own.

* Cf. Whitman's

"Strange and hard the paradox here I give :
Objects gross and the unseen soul are one."

X

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

FOR us to-day the Kingship of God means the Lordship of Christ, which is something more than the accepting of a teaching or an offer which Jesus once set before men, and also more than a realisation of God in our own consciousness. It is all these things together, one interpreting the other. To have found in our own consciousness the same reality which was manifest in Jesus, and which He brought to the world, is to have taken the first step towards the Kingship of God. It is to find the Father through the Son who has been revealed in ourselves, and whose meaning of promise and demand is now made plain to us, as covering the whole of life.

We have seen that this goes beyond a private experience, that it is a vocation which can only be fulfilled in membership of the body of which Christ is Head.* It is in the fellowship of those who have entered into a like experience that the creative work which Jesus began is to be carried on. There is no other way in which it can be done; no other way by which the reality of

* The word "Church" has come to carry unfortunate meanings for many people. It is used in this chapter in its simple sense as the society of people who believe in Christ.

“God and man at-one” can be shown amongst men in such a compelling way that they will desire it for themselves; no other way in which the Son of Man can win His victory over all the powers of disintegration and delusion which infest the world. There is to be a gradual leavening of human life until the whole is leavened, and a new order of things is revealed. The leaven is to be the way of life to which the Christian finds himself committed in his confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. That way is the way of love.

Here we seem to have gone somewhat astray. We have been greatly taken with the idea of a leavening process. It is so very quiet and gradual. We have looked at the demands of the Sermon on the Mount and agreed that it would be splendid—if everybody did it. But since everybody does not do it, and the great majority show no very clear disposition to begin, we have said that this is the ideal, and not possible as it stands, while society is as it is. We must take it gently, in the hope that at length conditions will have so improved that we can carry it out in its entirety. In other words, we have adulterated the leaven, and that is not what Jesus meant.

It is true that there have been a few people here and there who have been fanatical enough to try to exhibit the full strength. We have labelled them, with some colour of justice, extreme individualists, literalists, anarchists (even if Christian anarchists), and during the last few years have sent quite a number of them to prison. I say “we,” because the church has on the whole, been at least a consenting party. Much ingenuity

has been expended in showing just where they were wrong, but—

“ was it a jest of Christ’s,
And is this their sin among men to have taken Him at
His word ? ”

The plain fact is that they refused to adulterate the leaven. They are not individualists at all, in any correct sense of the word. They are not just putting their private conscience against the state; they are not taking “the atomic rather than the organic concept of society,” any more than the first Christians did. It is because they discern the body of Christ, beyond atomic limits, a body which is organic, personal, supernatural, that they will not deny Him. The element of truth in the label “individualist” is this, that they tried to do single-handed what, in the purpose of Jesus was to be the work of the Christian community, and which for long years it has failed adequately to do.

In the beginning it was not so. The first Christian society set itself whole-heartedly to the way of life which Jesus taught and lived. In the midst of a society which denied all He stood for, it lived its own life. It was not composed of perfect people; as Jesus said, the net gathered in all sorts, good and bad. But it made bold experiments in fellowship, and followed the light it had, and, for practically three centuries, so showed in itself the powers of the Kingship of God that no persecution or calumny could check its course. The great Roman empire had to capitulate to its awful meekness, and had it continued as it began, the course of human history might have been very different. But there came

a day when the church, in its eagerness for authority, compromised and, though it has done many mighty things since, it has never been able to rid itself of the weakness which ensued. The association of the church with the state, whether as vassal, lord, or rival for temporal power, has hindered the coming of the Kingship of God beyond all else, for it has led to the use of those very weapons of coercion which Jesus declined to handle. Its general acceptance of a social order based on an unchristian principle has finally led to this; that the individual Christian often finds himself in difficulties not unlike those of Paul in his struggles with the Jewish law.

All the errors of the church, and its present helplessness to do more than maintain its own existence, are due to its use of other methods than those which its Lord proposed, and to its idea of leavening the world by being careful not to be too far in advance. It has been far readier with schemes to restrain evil on the part of others than to show the whole good in itself.

The work of the church is, on the one part, that of a witness. It has to testify to the offer of God to men in Christ, which was the Kingship of God. Its assertion of Christ's Lordship must always mean that. It is also the body of His present action, the nucleus of the fellowship of the new race, in itself the leaven that is to leaven the whole.

Now one would be a fool to deny or belittle the fact that in many ways the church has done this. That it still persists, despite the dark chapters in its history, despite its divisions, its tyrannies and betrayals, is a testimony to the

reality in its possession. It has taken its good news to the ends of the earth. It has served mankind in wonderful ways. It has rescued men from bondage and given meaning to life for millions. It has profoundly modified human society wherever it has gone. There are not many people, probably even amongst those who have no personal use for the church, who would like to see it drop altogether out of the world's life. But it has not persuaded men of the reality of the Kingship of God, save as some far distant ideal, and, if one were questioned as to what the Kingship of God is actually like, it would scarcely be regarded by the average enquirer as a hopeful answer if he were pointed to the church, with the words, "Like that, only more so." Yet that should be the answer. There should be no need for books about it. There is, then, a grave weakness somewhere. Is it not in the church's way of life?

One part of the Christian witness has been carried on continuously and indefatigably, its propaganda by ritual and word. Priests, preachers and theologians have always been busy, celebrating, interpreting, explaining, exhorting. It is well. There is no reason why men should not express themselves through the gesture of ritual, if that helps them; though Jesus seems to have looked upon daily life as itself the proper ritual, and the oblation of self as the sacrifice. There is no sense in a contempt for theology, even though theologians may sometimes strain human patience. But that so much explanation is needed drives one to ask questions. Why should we have to labour so to persuade

people that our good news is credible and reasonable and not contrary to the real nature of things? It may be said that to the "natural man" whose separated self is the very hub of all things, who builds his whole world of thought and action round self, the good news of Christ is incredible. It is too good, or too preposterously unlike his own scheme of life, to be true. But if it strikes him as being forced and artificial, is it not because he is asked to accept all manner of statements, which he cannot verify, merely on the authority of the church? He is not prepared to do that; and what right have we to blame him? Jesus never acted in that way; He offered Himself for verification. Where the church has succeeded, where it has won men, has been where the life of its members was the obvious proof of its words. The thing it has to give cannot truly be communicated by words, but only by personal contact and inspiration. That was what Jesus intended. Where the church could show changed individuals it has appealed with success to individuals, and does so still.

From this standpoint the Christian society, in the mutual communication between its members, in the continual flow of divine energy which circulates between them and the transcendent Personality who is its Head, should push back the limitations by which the individual is beset, and exhibit an ever-growing richness of personal life. Since the church is continuous, each generation should come into a larger inheritance, to which it would be able also to make its own contribution. In our present divided state, that is hardly possible, and it demands a concentrated

and sustained effort which the present feverish activity on quite subsidiary matters leaves little room for.

Our weakness in this matter is seen in the multitude of small coteries and societies which have come into existence up and down the country to serve the needs of those who desire what may be called further research into the possibilities of spiritual life, that is, of "God and man at one." Often such societies are dismissed as merely the revivers of dead heresies, but a revival suggests that the "heresy" is not so dead after all, and that it contains some truth which the church has forgotten or neglected. At least it would seem that all who are seeking truth in these matters should find in the fellowship of the church the fullest encouragement to pursue their search with any who are like-minded, with full appreciation of the varying gifts of the Spirit of God. To suppose that Christianity is a closed system seems very absurd, in the face of the words and general attitude of Jesus, to say nothing of the nature of the case. May we expect new developments and discoveries in every other region than that of personal life? Rather it is, as we have seen, in the enlargement of human consciousness that man's true development consists, and the last way to arrive at such an end is to shut out of our fellowship those whose ideas may be disturbing to our settled minds. So to deal with them is the easiest way no doubt, but it confirms in those so treated the individual idiosyncrasy, which in fellowship might have been corrected, and annuls the real contribution they might have made.

The value of the kind of fellowship for which I am here pleading has been proved, not only in times past, but in our own day. Of late years what is known as the "group method" of exploration and research has been well tried. Companies of men and women have met together, bringing the most diverse individual opinions, and only united in the community of their aim. In a fellowship of prayer and thought they have been able to come to conclusions of the greatest importance to them all, not by debate, not by talking or voting one another down, but by arriving at a common mind on the matter. This is achieved because the idea is not to see the weaknesses in the other's point of view, but rather to *think with the other*, and so to see the element of truth that holds him. It is a real sharing, and I think I am stating a sober conclusion when I say that a widespread and continuous use of this method in the church would redeem it from much futility and produce results in spiritual growth which would be surprising.

II

There is needed, however, not less than the intensification of fellowship, a great widening of fellowship also, if the Christian society is to play its true part. In a very true sense the church has always been a fellowship; at its best, a fellowship of a very high order, but on too limited a scale. Men and women of all ranks and conditions have met together for the sacrament of a common meal, from the beginning until now,

even if at times it has been the token of a reality that was missing. Not only so, but to take one instance out of many, the forms of fellowship which sprang up within the evangelical movement initiated by the Wesleys and their helpers, though often misunderstood and derided, were of a very intimate and real kind. In varied fashion they still continue, though scarcely with the hearty co-operation of earlier days. It is still true, however, that rich and poor, master and servant, capitalist and labourer, the giver and receiver of alms, meet together for conversation and mutual help in the spiritual life, and that in their meeting all "worldly" differences are ignored. So far as it goes, it is excellent, but the weakness is this: there must always be an understanding that when those who have met for an hour "in Christ," resume the ordinary intercourse of daily life in the mill, the office, the works, the kitchen, or on 'change, they are no more "one," but very distinctly separated by economic laws which must not be questioned. That again involves a further understanding, that in the actual fellowship—at least if there should be such a mixture of classes as I have described, there must be no introduction of any topic which might create discussion as to the working out of the Christian religion in the objective ways of social life. This restriction has often given an air of unreality and abstractness to the fellowship, because it hinders people from speaking about what is really on their minds, and forces them to be general and vague.

It is an excellent thing that there can be a meeting in which all divisions and differences

can be ignored, but it would be much better if they could be met and dealt with and overcome. Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, in their monograph, *The Town Labourer*, a book every Christian should read, show how just this ignoring of differences in Christian fellowship hindered the cause of human freedom.

It is no answer at all to say that if such widening of the ground of fellowship were allowed we should soon be involved in difficulties. Certainly we would, but what is the fellowship of the church for, if not that we may solve by its means the *real* difficulties which we cannot manage single-handed. What is meant, of course, when this is said, is that there would soon be friction. So far as that is true—and it depends entirely on the spirit in which the thing was done, it would but prove what I have already suggested, that there has been an unreality about the fellowship which perfect frankness had revealed, and the cure would have to be sought. But there are real difficulties of quite another sort, which at present the church does not deal with, though they are often met with almost immediately by those who come into our membership.

For instance, individuals, even when changed in heart and outlook, find themselves fast in the complicated web of modern life. Who can boast of clean hands, if all his doings and receivings are pursued to the end? It is even quite sorrowfully possible for a man to strive in pure good will for some social change, and find at the end that he has done more harm than good, because all his efforts are thwarted by the fact that he is working in a wholly selfish and delusive order. The

individual Christian has left to him, for the most part, this choice : of becoming on the one hand a crank and an anarchist, with scarcely an avenue of livelihood or usefulness left to him, save that of professional rebel, or, on the other, of keeping his private life and his life as a citizen in separate compartments, and so accepting a long compromise with the evil order. There are those, I know, who do not see it so, and it is not my business to judge them. There are those who see it, but who get so used to it that they can rub along without discomfort, exhibiting what Bernard Shaw calls, " a conscientious Laodiceanism in religion, and an earnest but constant sense of the importance of money." They live, that is, by discounting the meaning of religion. To very many however, and an increasing number, the position creates an inward strife from which they would eagerly escape, if they knew how.

Such Christians realise that to be sober, clean living people in their private lives, reasonably kind and charitable, is not enough : the majority of people are that. Nor can they deceive themselves with the supposition that the " extra " which Jesus demanded (Matt. v. 46, 47), can be met by an extra scrupulosity in the matter of what is allowable after tea, or how they spend Sunday. The unworldliness of Jesus was so plainly of another kind. Meanwhile, the glaring shames, the ugliness, and hardness of life assail their conscience daily. Every ill-nurtured child's face, every prematurely aged and broken figure in the streets of our cities reproaches them with its " Inasmuch . . ." Every outworking of the selfishness of modern society into injustice

and brutality hurts them. They cannot be comforted by the superficial glitter of prosperity or victory, for they are not able to create out of men and women and children impersonal abstractions which they can call the enemy, or labour, or capital, or the criminal class. They see that, if Jesus was right, the whole order is wrong in principle. But what are they to do?*

Where is the ordinary man to find for himself a way of life that is free from compromise? I remember hearing an artist argue—for some of his fellows more than himself—that the happy-go-lucky life which they lived, and in which they ignored all the conventions and, at times, something more, was far nearer the Christian ideal than that of the average church-goer. The artist, he claimed, was a truly sociable being, full of forgiveness for everybody, willing to share his last sixpence with another, taking no thought for the morrow, and ready to make the greatest sacrifices to his own ideal. He was really a free man. Granting a measure of truth in this, it is only a measure, for the artist hardly escapes from the evil order of things, and his example is not of much value to the ordinary man who has no special personal gift, and for whom there is

* The point is clearly put in a letter published as this chapter is being revised. "It is as impossible for me to get my living as I would wish as for any other human being, living under a commercial system: for if I lived on an income supplied by friends, or on an inherited income, or begged my bread, I am still an integral part of the system. I may modify the conditions: others may do better than I, but in the end all bread, all pleasure, all joy in life to-day is tainted for us all by the knowledge that in order to live ever so humbly, compromise with one's principles is a baneful necessity." George Lansbury, in *The Venturer*, November, 1919.

no room at all save within the circle in which he has been born and trained, and, by playing some part in which, he lives. It would seem that he must cling to the adulterated leaven theory and make the best of it. But the world generally is not greatly impressed with the kind of witness which this affords, though it is becoming painfully conscious of its own difficulties, and can see no better way out. It can only go on concocting schemes to stave off a general break up, with no sure prospect that the new will be any better than the old.

I venture to say that the church has the solution in its own hands, and that the way out would become clear enough if it would set about the other part of its witness, with anything like the zeal it has shown in its propaganda by ritual and word. It has, as we have said, a two-fold witness to give. One part is in word, about things which by their very nature cannot be proved by ordinary processes of argument. The other part is in life. There it can be tested. But if on the point where men can test the church it fails, can it reasonably complain if they show little interest in the part which they cannot test? It would be absurd to expect any interest at all under such conditions, save for the fact that the hearts of men are full of a hunger so great that they will pass over almost any contradiction if they feel that there is reality behind. That only makes the failure of the church in this particular more tragic and blameworthy. It should be the obvious thing for a man to say: "I cannot alone live this life of freedom and love, but here is a community in which it is being done. I must

join on here." Such seems to have been the intention of Jesus.

The church must begin to manifest in itself that new way of life which Jesus asked of those who were drawn by His good news. It must do this corporately, as its witness to the reality of the Kingship of God, the visible token of its belief that Jesus Christ is Lord. We have to ask ourselves honestly whether a fellowship in spiritual things which leaves ordinary human relations untouched, and is content so to leave them, goes far enough to answer to our professions, especially since we have seen that the words "in Christ" touch every part of human life. Ought not this spiritual oneness, realised as it has often been, to work out into wider fellowships on other levels? * Would not the facing of realities that involves and the freedom and joy it would bring do very much to open the door to that mighty new consciousness which would make all else possible? If the corporate life of the Kingship of God cannot be made to work within the church, even under the complex conditions of modern life, what reason have we to believe that it is possible at all? We shall have to conclude that the message of Jesus was for another day, a simpler day; that it is no longer relevant.

The Christian must begin to ask himself serious questions. Can I love a man as a fellow Christian

* There is in operation, I understand, in some few places, what is known as *The Fellowship of the Common Table*. Its rule is not communism, but that each member of the fellowship shall declare to the rest his whole resources and how he spends them. Whatever else is done is left to good will. I write of it only from hearsay, but it looks like getting to business on one point at least.

and then treat him as a means to my end in business? Is it not rather absurd to pretend that he is my brother in Christ, if he and I are ranged on opposite sides in a class war; if I resent his claiming for himself—as a member of his class—what I claim as a right for myself—as a member of my class? Or if I understand him to think that I ought to be grateful for conditions which I know he would consider intolerable for himself? If I call a man my brother in Christ, it can only mean, if I am not fooling myself, that I claim for him all that I claim for myself.

The first Christians did not interpret their fellowship as one in spiritual things only, but went to the extreme length of having all things common. In its fulness that communism seems to have broken down, but the church still continued to be a social guild for many years. In the early second century document, *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, the warnings about "Christ-traffickers," suggest that there had been impostors who took advantage of the system. That is likely enough, but it is evidence that the church fellowship was still of a wide order. We cannot afford to dismiss these first endeavours as the necessarily futile attempts of deluded enthusiasts to reach the millennium too quickly. They did more towards achieving that end than we seem able to compass now. The fact that there have been so many attempts since then to found communities, in which the people should stand together in all-round fellowship, suggests that there is in the idea a vitality which has not been exhausted. It is not the idea that is wrong.

Was it not in some such way that Christ intended His new society to be the leaven which should leaven the whole? It was not just to be an association of individuals who had all made the same discovery, but was to show corporately His way of life. In some ways the early church was slow to learn. It was some time before a Christian man found that he could not hold another as a slave, but he did find it, and he did not wait for the rest of the world to come round to his opinion before he acted. Dr. Cadoux has, I think, conclusively proved that the first Christians stood absolutely against participation in war.*

Is it too late to begin again to create a truly catholic church which shall avoid the errors which have rent and weakened the visible church, all of which are due, as has been said, to its ambition for other powers and its use of other weapons than those which belong to its Lord.

The church must be, in the first place, "a colony of heaven," a fellowship of those who have seen in Christ the reality of the Kingship of God, and have renounced the self-delusion to which they see it to be opposed. It will count as the reason for its existence the furthering of the creative work which He began, that the kingdoms of the world may become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ. It is therefore, super-national, and can acknowledge no claim on the part of warring nations to take part in their quarrels, not because its members are individualists, but because they are not. There could never be possible again the spectacle that

* *The Early Christian Attitude to War.*

Benjamin Kidd called "the most monstrous phenomenon in the history of humanity," fellow members of the body of Christ set at one another's throats at the bidding of the state. Such a church could positively make war to cease in the earth.

But war between nations is finally due to economic reasons. Behind the shrapnel and the poison gas is the fierce competition of selfish interest for tariffs, concessions, spheres of influence, places in the sun, and such, all based on the idea that there is not enough for everybody, and that power to live fully depends on the private possession of material things. "If men had understood, they would know that this universal butchery was not an accident, but the logical consequence of our social order."* If the church is to be free from complicity in war, it must have other ideals here also. It cannot ignore the material side of life, for it is just that side which is to be transformed. The people who protest so hotly that the church should not concern itself with the material sphere only mean that they want to be let alone to do what they will there.

They are right so far, that it is not the business of the church to seek to coerce those outside it into ways of which it may approve. It has often been too ready to take the mote out of the world's eye in that way. But in itself it has to show how material things are a sacrament, to break the bread of fellowship. Its essential principle is that all men are one in Christ. It must mean that; consequently its fellowship must be "in all the purposes and activities of life."

* Anatole France: *Clarté*, November 8th, 1919.

Its worship will be the flower springing naturally out of its daily life. In it art will again find its place as the overflow of joyful life, the expressed communion with the Divine Spirit through men and things. If, to take the first illustration that comes to hand, groups of men all over the country can form themselves into co-operative societies for the production and distribution of the essential things of life, on principles which they approve, is it beyond the wit of Christian men to bind themselves together so that the whole of life should be a mutual service, to which all might bring their varied gifts, and none would be shamed by the consciousness that his privileges and comforts are tainted by the lack of others? That it could not be done without what we call sacrifice is certain enough. But do we really believe in the Kingship of God?

Some time ago I was present at a conference of 200 people of all sorts, where the question was asked: How can I make my daily work my first contribution to the Kingdom of God? We divided into groups: administrators, distributors, manual workers, clerks, teachers, artists, house-keepers and domestic workers. (As I remember it, there was no one there to represent agriculture.) When the results were formulated and announced at a general meeting, there was one common note to all, though varying in emphasis, that of goodwill held up and defeated by the evil order in which we all lived, and in which the individual found himself to be comparatively helpless. The hand was subdued to that in which it worked. Beyond that again appeared the fact that some, at least, were conscious of such an amount of

compromise that they would be glad to take steps to free themselves, if they only could have the guarantee that the church would stand solidly behind them and count itself one with them. Now it is comparatively easy to give heroic advice to other people—and pass on—but it is scarcely reasonable to expect the ordinary man, bound by all sorts of ties, to face the evil of the world single handed. The church together could do it, not just by exhortation and advice, but in the actual practice of life. It may be added that on the mission field it continually does this very thing, though on the older stations, where Christianity has become established, the tendency is to adopt the theory of salvation by permeation, so far as society is concerned.

III

The saving of society by a sort of Christian Fabianism and adulteration of the leaven must, one thinks, be regarded as a failure. Would it not be near the truth to change the figure a little and say that the church has inoculated the world with a mild form of Christianity and made it proof against the real thing? So far as I can discover from the testimony of many people in every grade of life, the standards obtaining in industry and commerce are as far from Christian as ever they were, save for a few notable exceptions, and, since the war, lower than for many years. That class relationships are more embittered seems certain enough.

It is not enough that the church's life, as shown by the individuals who make it up, should be as clean and honourable and serviceable as any that is known. It is that; but it ought to be of another order altogether. The only way in which it can be so is for the church to act corporately by its own values, and become a fellowship in which those values would be expressed. Out of such obedience would come that new and wider consciousness of union with God and all life. We should discern Christ clearly in one another, and come to understand more fully all that He stands for. We should interpret Him afresh to our own age.

Some considerable and always growing part of the church's fellowship is that of the children who are born in it, and one of the most awful revelations of weakness which the war has provided is the ignorance of what Christianity means shown by so many of those who have been brought up in the shelter and care of the church. The testimony of chaplains and commissions set to enquire into the state of religion in the army make rather depressing reading. To many Christianity was something having no particular relation to daily life, and especially social life, at all. Others, by whom the Bible story had been more regarded, found no point of contact between the standpoint of Jesus and the thing they were engaged in; and, since Christians on every hand were praising the thing they were engaged in, they could only conclude that the standpoint of Jesus was not to be taken seriously. Very largely they fell back on a sort of pagan fatalism and, in this spirit, poured out the energy

and devotion of their youth with a passion that such religion as had been presented to them had never been able to command.

Their successors are growing up amongst us, children of our own members. Are they to go out to earn their living presently with high visions of good, as many of them do, only to discover that the impressions they have formed from beholding Jesus in simplicity must now be laid aside in practical life, and kept in some sacred place for purposes of worship only? A church such as I have endeavoured to describe would not merely engineer movements for "getting hold of the children" to replace its falling membership, for that is vain unless there is some real community of purpose for them to grow up into, but would spend itself lavishly on its children, and spare no pains to make the Christian ideal live before them all in its freedom and joy, so establishing them in the truth of Christ, not only by word, but by the visible life of the community, that they would find the Spirit within them fully interpreted, and to desert to the camp of delusion would be the last thing that could occur to them. In this way the church would lead the way in the production of fine persons.

The church, however, is to be something more than a society existing for the mutual service of its members and the training of its own children. It must always be a missionary church, knowing no frontiers, and always seeking to bring in those who are without. It might, perhaps, be objected that if it became a fellowship in material as well as spiritual things, it would then, as a great corporation, set itself in competition with the

world outside, and so immediately land itself back in the old order. That could not be so, for its whole standpoint is different. In the first place its door must always be open for any others to come in. Further, its fellowship, however wide, is only the foundation of its life, which is to be one of self-giving. Mere separation, especially competitive separation, is alien to its whole idea of life. It exists for an end which is not itself. All it has and can be is for the service of men and the Kingship of God. It has to act redemptively upon the world, in all things taking the place of its Lord, seeking His ends by His methods.

This it would do, not always corporately, in the ordinary sense of the word, but through individual members who recognised some special vocation, who had partaken of its spirit and would always be conscious that it stood behind them with all the counsel and help it had to give. Such individuals might well make experiments in applied Christianity in whatever department of life they had to do with, seeking to bring into effect the principles which had been provided in the fellowship of the church itself. It is an undoubted fact, now proved by many instances reported to us, that where Christian principles are fearlessly applied they work.*

* See, for example, the account of an experiment in "Industrial Democracy," tried in the works of the Packard Piano Company (America), reported in *Public Opinion*, November 14th, 1919: Says the President of this Company: "We used to build pianos. Then we stopped building pianos and began to build men—they have looked after the building of pianos."

Should not the church also be ready to go out as it can, without prejudice to its own faith, in co-operation with men of goodwill who may not be able to accept the Christian creed, but who are set upon bringing into manifestation what we mean by the Kingship of God, so far as it concerns the order of society? There is always the risk here that we may be inveigled into the use of methods which are not of Christ, but here again I dare to say that if the church were showing in itself the whole Christian way of life, the result would be such that our methods would speak for themselves as the only way by which permanent good can be attained.*

One need hardly point out how a church which was at once super-national and inter-national would make for the unity of nations, by providing

* As an example of such desirable co-operation I append an extract from conclusions reached by an International Conference on Labour and Religion (London, September, 1919). After a preamble recognising the Law of Service, the Universal Brotherhood of Man, the evils of mammon-worship, poverty and war, the statement goes on to express the common inspiration of the assembly as being "a conviction rooted in a sphere above and beyond the material sphere. . . .

"It expresses itself sometimes as reliance upon the forces of Evolution which have developed humanity as we now know it and which are confidently expected to raise it to vastly higher levels of life;

"Or as the duty of obedience to the transcendent principles of morality which are not derived from experience, but claim to control all conduct, individual or social;

"Or, as in the East, a faith in the Divine Immanence and therefore in the Solidarity of Man;

"Or, as in Christian minds, a belief in the moral purposes of the consequent Brotherhood of Man, the moral sovereignty of the ideals of conduct embodied in Jesus of Nazareth, and the continual guidance of the same Spirit working in and through the upward movements of human history toward a perfect goal."—*Goodwill*: November, 1919.

that religious bond which is above all others the bond of unity.

Even—or should one not say, especially—evil-doers come within the province of the church. It will not be content to leave such to the hard mercies of the penal system. The pillar of the church who now sits upon the magistrate's bench will be the chairman of the committee which sets itself to deal redemptively with those misfits of society which are so largely its own products. What can be done in that direction has been wonderfully shown by Mr. Mott Osborne in his wardenship of the Sing Sing Prison of New York.* The difference that the introduction of a Christian principle has made in the treatment of the most "hardened" men, and the results of that treatment in practice, are of the sort which would be reckoned incredible, had they not actually occurred. The state as such can do nothing with such people but shut them up. It has no weapon but coercion. It must always be thinking of itself, must preserve itself at all costs, and mete out similar treatment to all who refuse obedience, whether for good reasons or bad. But the last thing the church must think about is itself. Its authority must never be asserted, but must be such that it will be freely confessed. It lives, not by caring for itself, and not to spend its strength in fighting this or that symptom of evil, deluding itself with the fancy that it is in this way bringing in the Reign of God, but to exhibit in itself all that Christ stands for, being ready, if need be, to be crucified like its Lord.

† See *Society and Prisons* : Thomas Mott Osborne (Yale University Press).

Nor is that so impossible. The church that set itself, within any modern state, to such a way of life as is here suggested, refusing steadfastly to acknowledge any authority as beyond that of Christ Himself, might, at an early stage, find that it had to win all over again the battle which the early Christians fought against the Roman empire—and lost in winning. At the present moment there is a strong tendency to make the state the supreme idol, and we must be well aware that it can exercise a far subtler power than ever the Roman empire knew. "The science of creating and transmitting public opinion under the influence of collective emotion is about to become the principal science of civilisation, to the mastery of which all governments and all powerful interests will in the future address themselves with every resource at their command."* Such words whether meant for warning or not, we may well take to ourselves. Only a Christian community which knows its own mind and has its own sure standards in Christ will be able to prevail against such a force as Mr. Kidd's words imply. It is not enough to reflect that, after all, "the devil is an ass," and can be relied upon to defeat himself, nor can we pin our faith to the idea that a more democratic state would be less likely to turn tyrant, for such a state would be as easy a prey to delusions as any other.

Yet the church has its own weapons, as it has its own defence. Where it is content to use them, its good will cannot be mistaken. Christ is both the power and the wisdom of God. It is not the enemy of men, or of human life and joy or of

* *The Science of Power.*

science or art or material things; nor even of the state as an association of men. It is only the enemy of the delusive order which holds men in bondage, and of the selfishness which ravages the fair promise of human life and personality. Where it has failed has been where it has forgotten that it lives by love and truth and service, and turned to ways which are a denial of its true end. Would not such a fellowship as the church should be win men from their fears as nothing else has ever done? Would not this be the lifting up of the Son of Man which should draw all men unto Him? Are there not, even now, thousands ready to join such a fellowship who pass by the church of to-day with something like contempt? Not the careless and sensual and selfish only; not the ignorant and blind; but men in whose hearts there burns a passion for spiritual freedom are outside, making what shift they can with such like-minded people as they can find. At present people have to be urged to fellowship, even within the church, and often respond reluctantly because of the natural feeling that the fellowship is artificial. But in a crusade fellowship comes of itself.

Such a church would provide an instrument for God's action in the world as has never yet been seen, because its way of life, its values, its ends, its methods, would be wholly those of Christ. It would know something of His deep joy, His delight in human fellowship. It would walk and work in freedom and the old note of Christian gaiety would return. It would be in daily contact with the source of life and power, and would live, not by tradition or at second hand, but

spontaneously and creatively. There would be nothing to hinder the full realisation of "God and man at one in all the purposes and activities of life."

We might then lift up our heads and look with confidence for the victory of the Son of Man and the New Age.

The Christian Revolution.

A NEW SERIES EDITED BY
NATHANIEL MICKLEM, M.A.

EDITORIAL FOREWORD.

HRISTIANITY means Revolution though not by force and blood. "These that have turned the world upside down" was first said of the followers of Christ in ancient Salonica.

It must be said of them again in every land.

These are days of change and revolution, and a new age dawns. Humanity stands at the parting of the ways—for life or death. These books are written under the persuasion that only a religious solution is adequate to the world's need, and that only upon the principles for which Jesus of Nazareth stands in history can the world be fashioned to heart's desire.

For the world's problem lies in lack of fellowship. How shall man be made at one with man, class with class, nation with nation, and all men with God? It will here be contended that this problem is one, and that Jesus is the key to it. The meaning of religion lies in what Jesus was Himself, and its end is that men should be like Him. Such a Christianity is revolutionary because it involves a complete change in the standard of values whereby men live, and therefore alone has in it the power of a new heaven and a new earth wherein shall dwell righteousness and brotherhood.

This series is the work of a company of friends, who, while speaking for themselves individually, yet find themselves at one in a firm and growing conviction upon these serious matters. They send forth these books in the hope that in some small measure they may further human fellowship and true religion.

The Christian Revolution Series.

Edited by NATHANIEL MICKLEM, M.A.,
Sometime Scholar of New College,
Tutor and Chaplain at Mansfield College, Oxford.

VOLUMES ALREADY ISSUED.

LAY RELIGION. By HENRY T. HODGKIN, M.A., M.B.
Author of "The Church's Opportunity in the Present Crisis,"
etc. Crown 8vo. Second edition. 3s. 6d. net.

THE EARLY CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO WAR:
A Contribution to the History of Christian Ethics. By C. J.
CADOUX, M.A., D.D., Lecturer at Mansfield College, Oxford.
With Foreword by the Rev. W. E. ORCHARD, D.D. Crown
8vo. 10s. 6d. net.

RECONCILIATION AND REALITY. By W. FEARON
HALLIDAY, M.A., Winner of the "Large Gold Medal" and
First Senior Moderatorship in Mental Science and Moral
Science in Trinity College, Dublin. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

THE OPEN LIGHT : An Enquiry into Faith and Reality.
By NATHANIEL MICKLEM, M.A. Crown 8vo. 4s. 6d. net.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL. By W. E. WILSON, B.D.
Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

THE WAY TO PERSONALITY. By GEORGE B. ROBSON.
Third edition. Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

THE CHRIST OF REVOLUTION. By JOHN R.
COATES, B.A. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net. in Paper Covers.
4s. 6d. net in Cloth.

THE REMNANT. By RUFUS M. JONES, D.Litt. Crown
8vo. 5s. net.

THE KINGSHIP OF GOD. By GEORGE B. ROBSON.
Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

OTHER VOLUMES TO FOLLOW.

THE SWARTHMORE PRESS LTD.,
72, OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W.1.

SWARTHMORE PRESS BOOKS.

“THESE THINGS SHALL BE.”

By GEORGE LANSBURY. Third Large Edition. *Crown 8vo.*
1s. 6d. net.

This is a book of Hope. Not, be it understood, the superficial optimism that refuses to face unpleasant facts and cries “Peace” when there is no peace. Mr. Lansbury has lived in too close contact with the hard realities of life to take a rose-coloured view of the world. Nevertheless, his faith in the ultimate triumph of justice and peace and fellowship is unshaken by the frankest recognition of difficulties and disappointments. In these glowing chapters he gives the reason for the hope that is in him, and no one can read his book without being greatly refreshed and heartened.

JESUS CHRIST AND SOCIAL CHANGE.

By REV. STANLEY A. MELLOR, B.A., Ph.D. *Crown 8vo.*
3s. 6d. net.

A series of deeply thoughtful, outspoken and vigorous addresses by this very popular Liverpool Minister. The book deals with Christianity as it should influence social life.

CHRISTUS CONSOLATOR.

By CARL HEATH. 2s. net.

POEMS : 1912-1919.

By GILBERT THOMAS, Author of “Birds of Passage,”
“The Further Goal,” “Things Big and Little,” etc.
Crown 8vo. 5s. net.

A collection in one volume of all the poems which the author wishes to preserve from his earlier books of verse, some of which are out of print and still in demand. A considerable number of new poems are added.

POEMS : SECOND BOOK.

By EDITH ANNE STEWART (Mrs. J. M. Robertson).
Author of "Pilgrimage and Battle," etc. *F'cap.* 8vo.
1s. 3d. *net.*

CIVILISATION : 1914-17.

By GEORGES DUHAMEL, translated by T. P. CONWIL-
EVANS. *Crown* 8vo. 6s. *net.*

" 'Civilisation' is a marvellous book—perhaps with 'Vie des Martyres' the greatest book that the war has produced—perhaps the only book, indeed, to which the word great can be applied at all. . . . There is no reason why 'Civilisation' should not have the success in this country that it has had already in its own. We have not ourselves produced a war book to compare with it."—*Everyman*.

THE SWARTHMORE PRESS LTD.

THE VENTURER.

A Journal of Freedom and Fellowship.

No. 1 (New Series) was published in October, 1919.
Price Sixpence Monthly.

Yearly Subscription, 7s. 6d. post free; Six Months,
3s. 9d. post free.

Among early contributors to the New Series of "The Venturer" are the following :

Norman Angell.

G. D. H. Cole.

John Drinkwater.

H. Wilson Harris.

Henry T. Hodgkin.

Laurence Housman.

Sisley Huddleston.

George Lansbury.

Robert Lynd.

Robert Nichols.

Rev. W. E. Orchard, D.D.

Richard Roberts.

Malcolm Sparkes.

Rev. Edward Shillito.

Arthur Waugh.

M. P. Willcocks.

THE SWARTHMORE PRESS LTD.,
72, OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W.1.

Robson, G B

231
R 576

The kingship of God

231
R 576

0

